IMC
Hist.
Col.
FIC
P802W
1930
c1

nda and Greta

UW-EAU CLAIRE MCINTYRE LIBRARY
[redacted]
3 0628 0000037032

WANDA AND GRETA AT BROBY FARM

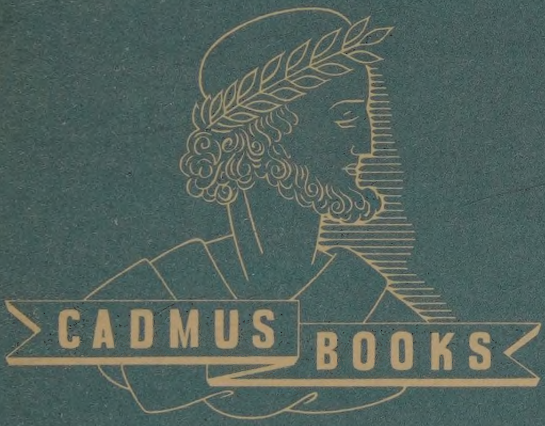
BY AMY PALM

[redacted]
LIBRARY

In memory of
[redacted]
Professor and Dean
at [redacted]

Presented by
[redacted]

UNIVERSITY OF [redacted]


CADMUS
BOOKS

WANDA AND GRETA AT BROBY FARM

BY AMY PALM

Translated from the Swedish by Siri Andrews

Golden Star Castle was not a real castle at all, but it was even dearer to Wanda and Greta than if it had been. It was on Broby Farm, the lovely Swedish place where the two little girls lived, and where interesting things were happening all the time.

When jolly Aunt Annie came to Broby there was a party at Golden Star Castle. This time Wanda, who was always getting into mischief, got into only a little bit of trouble. It was much worse on the day she climbed the hill to where Auntie was making a painting. Auntie had left, but there was the painting, half done, and there were the loveliest colored paints in tubes that squeezed so easily. Somehow Wanda just couldn't help getting into trouble that time. And when she took the short cut across the brook—where she had to jump—that was just too bad!

Greta had adventures, too. She left a tiny fish on the fairies' stone doorstep and, sure enough, the fairies took it—or someone did. Maybe the fisherman's cat which was strolling around knows something about that.

No summer could go by without a picnic on the island, but who could know that there was a curious cow there, or who could tell that a big storm would come up in the afternoon? That was a *real* adventure. The summer was full of interesting, exciting things. And then, when summer was over, there came the biggest surprise of all for Wanda and Greta.

* * * *

WANDA AND GRETA AT BROBY FARM

GRETA STARED AT IT AMAZED

WANDA AND GRETA AT BROBY FARM

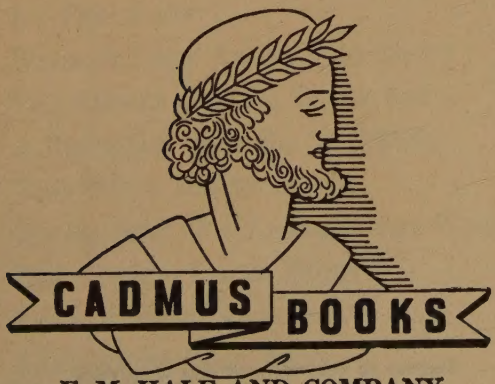
BY

AMY PALM

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH

By SIRI ANDREWS

This special edition is published by special arrangement with the publisher of the regular edition, LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.



E. M. HALE AND COMPANY
CHICAGO

PALM

WANDA AND GRETA AT BROBY FARM

COPYRIGHT • 1930
BY LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

UWEC McIntyre Library
DISCARDED
JUL 1984
EAU CLAIRE, WI

PZ8.2
.W5
1930
C.1

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	About Wanda, Greta, Golden Star Castle, and the Dancing Tub	1
II	Aunt Annie Comes	25
III	A Coffee Party at Golden Star Castle	38
IV	Wanda and Greta Teach the Hens to March	49
V	Greta's Dream	53
VI	The Ugly Boy, the Little Peasant Girl, and the Child in the Checked Dress	66
VII	An Excursion	79
VIII	Wanda's First Artistic Attempt	103
IX	The Fairies and the Black Cat	118
X	A Birthday and a Big Surprise	133
XI	Tant Sofie Makes a Visit	150
XII	Wanda Sets Out Alone in the World	163
XIII	The Cousins Leave Broby	170
XIV	Greta's First Sorrow	181
XV	Aunt Annie Goes Away	192

ILLUSTRATIONS

Greta Stared at it Amazed . . . . . *Frontispiece*

Tipping the Tub Over, She Found Wanda *Facing page* 20

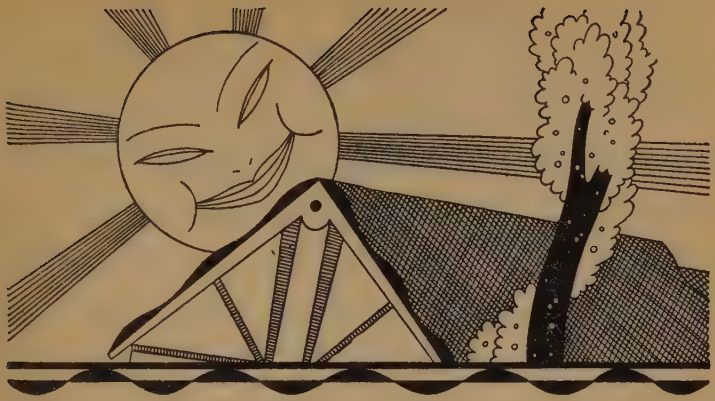
It Was a Strange Procession 50

Oh—Oh, How the Boat Did Jump ! 100

Greta Fled Toward Broby 122

The Horse Had Become Frightened, and Bolted . 154

WANDA AND GRETA AT BROBY FARM



WANDA AND GRETA AT BROBY FARM

CHAPTER I

ABOUT WANDA, GRETA, GOLDEN STAR CASTLE, AND THE DANCING TUB

THE PRETTY white plaster house at Broby shone so brightly in the sunshine that it almost hurt one's eyes to look at it. The windows were standing open, and here and there a dark blue shade was drawn down to shut out the blinding sunlight.

Bees buzzed back and forth between the rose bushes and the flower beds in the garden; strawberries were reddening more and more, and sending out a fragrance so tempting that it made one's mouth water.

The Maypole stood withered in the yard, and its dry garlands of flowers and leaves rustled like paper when a speck of wind whispering through them, surprised the gay, colored and gilded egg-shells into dancing.

The wreaths of cornflowers which the children had been so proud of because they had helped make them, now hung dark and shriveled; the only pretty thing about the whole Maypole was the flag, for that was still just as yellow and blue as when it had first been raised, and the pretty ball high up at the very top shone like the purest gold.

Broby lay on a hillside which sloped gently down to the water. Between the house and the shore stretched the big yard, with gravel walks, grassy lawns, elms and lindens; behind the house lay the

garden; the great wonderful garden with its grove of cherry trees, its berry bushes, arbors, jasmine and lilac hedges, its vegetable garden, and strawberry patch, and its lawn with wild strawberries, fruit trees, mossy benches, and resting places, a ninepin alley, and the very nicest little playhouse, made especially for the children.

In this little nest, the children of Broby, Greta [1] and Wanda, spent many happy hours.

Greta, who was almost eight, felt that of course she, because she was the elder, had a larger share in the playhouse than the six-year-old Wanda, a merry little "bundle," as Mother used to call her; a little "bundle" who looked out at the world with a pair of roguish brown eyes, sparkling with good health and mischief.

The door of the playhouse was standing open, so one could easily look in and see how nicely and neatly everything was arranged. A white net curtain adorned the little four-paned window, and

[1] Grā' tá.

Greta had hung the airy bit of cloth in folds which she thought quite entrancing and which were held in place by a large pink rosette. In front of the window stood a little pine table, freshly scrubbed a gleaming white. Ordinary small chairs, a rocking-chair, a bureau, and a pretty little sofa, all of pine, stood along the walls, which were covered with light, gray flowered wallpaper, the beauty of which was enhanced by many little pictures which had come as prizes with candy, and which the children had pasted up.

Yes, if one couldn't be happy in *Golden Star Castle,* as Greta called the playhouse, one was welcome to stay away ! *Golden Star Castle* was a beautifully high-sounding name, the children thought; it was long too, and that was the best part of it.

A chair was drawn up to the little table. On it lay an open book with several marks from Wanda's unruly fingers, for although Wanda could not read — she had just begun to learn her letters —

she always had to help Greta when she read; that is, she was sometimes allowed to point out letters, and these pointings often left traces.

In one corner of the playhouse, there was a cupboard, the door of which was not quite closed. Greta must have been in an unusual hurry this morning, since she had forgotten to lock the cupboard which held their dearest treasures. That there was something in it which glistened, one could see clearly, but what it was, one could only guess. The door crack was altogether too small for one to be able to see well.

At the foot of Broby hill was the steamer pier in a pretty inlet of Lake Mälar. The trees were mirrored, fair and sunlit, in the water, and the water lilies, which had long since wakened and opened their white petals, now lay quietly waiting for some playful wave to come and rock them; but wait they must, because today the sea lay as calm and glassy as if it were sleeping.

A fisherman's cottage, red and cozy, peeped

forth from the alder bushes along the shore. A point of land, usually called Sea Cape, ran out into the water, hiding the cottage so that one could not see it from the Broby Farm but only after one had reached the steamer pier.

On the other side of the road which led up to Broby, were the stable, the farm buildings, and the chicken-coop, a big eight-sided house, with a sharply sloping roof, the point of which was crowned by a creaking weather vane in the form of a dragon with a cloven tongue. This residence of the hen family, which the children used to visit daily, was separated from the rest of the farm buildings by a brook.

It was quiet and peaceful at Broby today. Every one seemed to have hidden away from the heat. At least no one seemed to be about except big Tony, the Newfoundland dog, who was stretched out on the warm sand. But the clatter of mortars and plates from the kitchen gave proof that it at least was not deserted.

Up in the stable Johansson, the coachman, was busy harnessing Dolly to the carriage, and from the chicken-coop came the shrill cock-a-doodle-doo of Polle, the rooster.

"Greta ! Wanda !" Mother called from the direction of the garden, and two happy child voices answered from the group of trees where the swing hung.

"Come now, children, it's time for your bath," called Mrs. Borg.

"We're coming !" There was a rustling in the bushes, and Greta and Wanda came rushing up to their mother, who was waiting for them on the veranda.

"We were having such fun," Greta burst out. "I could swing so high today, that King stood and barked everytime he saw my dress brush by."

King was Greta's own little dog and the children's best friend.

"I wanted to let him swing, but Greta wouldn't let me," said Wanda, still panting.

"He would have been sick," asserted Greta, patting her favorite, who now sat up on two legs and begged for sugar, for he had seen Greta put her hand into her pocket, and had hope that that meant something good.

"I haven't any sugar," sighed Greta. "Mother dear, may I run and get a piece for King ?"

"Yes, but just one piece," answered Mother, smiling and turning to go to Father who had just called her.

While Wanda was waiting alone for them, she amused herself by boring her feet down into the loose sand and then pretending that her shoes had become muddy so that she might have the pleasure of scraping and scraping them on the iron foot-scraper on the lowest step. King, who was sitting not far away, seemed to think that this was a wonderful idea, for he wagged his tail and drew down his ears so that he looked as if he were laughing.

Now Mother came back, and soon after came

Greta, and when King had received his promised bit of sugar, he ran off.

"Couldn't we bathe him in the pool ?" Greta burst out, as it suddenly occurred to her that King was dirty.

"Yes, more than gladly, if you can," her mother answered, thinking that King would surely run away when he knew mischief was brewing.

All the way down the maple-lined walk that led to the pleasant white bathhouse, they talked about how they were going to bathe King. The little "bundle" kindly took it upon herself to duck him, and hoped that he would shriek as much as she, herself, always did. Greta explained that she would duck him, because he was her dog; but Wanda was stubborn and felt that she, who was *little,* should be allowed to do it. It was the first time that anyone had heard Wanda admit that she was small; otherwise, she thought herself as big as her sister. After many "ifs" and "buts," they finally agreed to duck him together, and Wanda

smiled to herself, thinking in her secret heart that she would duck him several times.

When they came down to the plank bridge which led from the beach to the bathhouse, Wanda stopped and gave Mother her hand, for she knew that she was not allowed to walk alone there. Greta went first, holding the rail, and thought it great fun when the bridge rocked.

Wanda, who felt safe when Mother held her hand, leaned over the bridge to look at her reflection in the water, and said that the girl today had flowers in her hand, just as Wanda herself had.

"My girl has too," said Greta leaning out so eagerly to see her mirrored picture that if Mother had not caught her arm and held her back, she would actually have gone on her nose to the girl in the water and become acquainted with all the lovely snails that live there in their houses at the bottom, among the posts and stones.

King came trustingly into the dressing room, but he began to suspect trouble as the girls continually

dragged him out from the quiet corners under benches where he had taken refuge.

Greta was already undressed, and without shrieking, had just dipped the tips of her toes into the water to test it, when she came firmly up to poor King, who began to look unhappy and to tremble. She tried to drag him out, but he crept away. Wanda came to her help, and King who thought that two against one was too much, sat up on his hind legs, looking even more unhappy, trembled, held out his paw pleadingly, licked his chops, and whined softly.

But it was no use.

Greta had caught hold of him and bore him triumphantly toward the steps, while Wanda lectured him about the usefulness of bathing, just as Mother talked to her when she did not dare go in.

When they had reached the second step and King saw the pool below him, he grew wild. He made a last despairing attempt, gave a jerk, slipped

out of Greta's hands, and jumped right over Wanda, who feeling sure that the water would be cold had curled up on the step. The door was not quite closed, and King managed to push it open. And then with drooping tail, he set off up the hill at top speed, now and then throwing a frightened glance behind him.

For a long time after that, King hid away as soon as he felt that the bathing hour was near.

Wanda, who thought she had to be brave before King after she had told him that one should not be afraid of the water, thought that since he had gone she could take her revenge. She shrieked like a little pig when Mother ducked her, as she had to do, for otherwise Wanda would never have gone in at all.

On the way back, they rested as usual on the green bench beside the path and ate the sandwiches which Mother had for them in a little basket.

The hard, brittle, rye bread tasted good after

the bath, and today Wanda had a good appetite; she had already eaten two.

As they were sitting there, they caught a glimpse of Father's light summer clothes far up the walk, and then came a race to see who should reach him first, and be tossed into the air.

Wanda labored along, flinging her arms as well as her legs, and piping all the time like a rat. But Greta passed her just the same, and was being lifted so high that she could reach the lowest maple leaves when Wanda, out of breath, threw her arms about Father's knees and begged to be lifted just as high.

After she, too, had been tossed up to the maple leaves, Father put her down on the ground, and with Greta hanging on to his right hand and Wanda to his coat tails they went to meet Mother.

"Well, there wasn't any cry-baby in the bath-house today, was there ?" asked Father, looking at them.

"Mother thought I was good," answered Greta, and looked radiant when Father praised her. Wanda, on the other hand, seemed not to have heard his question. She felt a sudden concern about her shoestring, which she thought must be tied better, although it had seldom been tied so neatly before.

"So !" said Father, giving Wanda a little side glance, but she did not seem to see that either, she was so busy with that bothersome shoestring.

After they had left Father, they went to make their usual visit to Flora, who with her colt was in the enclosure behind the blacksmith's shop.

Flora was a pretty mare; so gentle and friendly that the children could safely pat her shining black neck and dare to give her sugar and bread. She always took it carefully as if she were afraid of hurting their small fingers.

The colt went bounding about, looking very funny with his long legs. He came right up to the fence today, but when Wanda wanted to pat

him, he grew frightened, turned square round, and kicked into the air with his hind legs.

The children named the long-legged colt Kurre.[1]

"Mother, may I have Kurre for my very own horse, when he gets big ?" asked Greta, after they had said good-bye to the horses.

"What would my little Greta do with Kurre ?"

"I'd make myself a cart of pure gold, and I'd harness Kurre to the cart . . . and then I'd ride all day long, and then I'd . . ."

"But *I* want to drive !" interrupted Wanda, who was delighted with her sister's idea, "and I'll sit on the driver's seat in livery and cap, and carry a whip and be Johansson."

"But you mustn't hit Kurre with the whip !"

"Yes, sometimes . . . then he'll run faster," said Wanda, looking very wise. "You may ride with us too, Mother," she promised, taking her hand.

"Yes, of course," agreed Greta.

[1] Kŭr'rĕ means a strange or odd creature.

"Thank you, little ones, that will be great fun," and Mother nodded and looked pleased.

When they reached home, Greta and Wanda went off together and for twenty minutes they walked arm in arm talking happily about how things would be and what they would do when Kurre was big and they had a golden cart.

Greta already had done her lesson in the morning and now had only half an hour's sewing to do before dinner. After that they could play all day.

She sat in Mother's room in a small chair by the window hemming a handkerchief. Mother knitting stockings, cast a glance at her sewing now and then. Sometimes the needle showed a strange tendency to take long, ugly stitches, and poor little Greta often had to rip out and sew again what the needle had done badly.

Wanda, who also had to do something useful, sat on a footstool beside Mother and cut paper

into tiny little bits for the chickens, so that the eggs should have better shells.

For the first ten minutes great industry reigned. Wanda's scissors went clip-clap, clip-clap and Greta's needle and thread were drawn quickly through the cloth. But it was not long before Wanda began to twist and Greta's needle to drag slowly through the hem, while many stolen glances flew through the window into the garden which never looked so pretty and inviting as it did during the work period.

And when at last Mother said they might lay aside their work, they jumped up like a Jack-in-the-box, kissed her, and ran out to tumble over each other and King on the lawn, or swing in the large swing, or play tag among the trees and bushes.

Wanda had darted ahead of her sister, and when Greta came out into the garden she had disappeared.

"Wanda ! Wanda !" she called, jumping for-

ward with her hat askew, and peering about in her desire to discover her sister. It was quite usual for Wanda to go and hide. If she were unhappy and angry, she disappeared to sputter in solitude until after a while her anger was over and she came out again, sweet and bright. And if, on the other hand, she were happy and mischievous she used to hide in order to rush out suddenly and scare Greta. One was never quite sure where one had the little tomboy, Wanda. Sometimes she glided out from the lilac bushes, sometimes from the raspberry hedge; sometimes she came up from the little ditch by the fence; yes, once she had crept in among the high peony bushes and had lain peeping out at Greta who ran about hunting for her. Wanda, her face red with repressed laughter and the discomfort of her position, had had great fun, because her sister could not see her where she lay. She was so red, poor thing, that one could have mistaken her for a full-blown peony.

Greta had come nearer and nearer without see-

ing her roguish eyes glistening between the leaves. Wanda did not quite know whether she should shriek loudly, or be very still and let her sister run by.

But just as Greta's legs came within reach, she stuck out her arm and caught hold of her foot.

Greta cried out with fright, and Wanda, with delight, and then they both laughed together like little geese.

But what the peony bed looked like after Wanda had left it is hardly worth talking about. Half an hour later the gardener was having a great deal to do in her hiding place, and Wanda herself had red eyes.

Now Greta had run all round the orchard and sung "Wanda" in all sorts of keys, but no Wanda shrieked, jumped out, or pinched her foot; no Wanda sat among the raspberries, the roses, or the peonies; no Wanda in the brook, the playhouse, or the arbors.

Where could she be?

Greta almost expected to see her come flapping down out of an apple tree, but she did not come from there either.

Greta called and King barked, but still no Wanda came.

This was too absurd !

Greta had to laugh to herself as she ran back and forth through the garden. She thought it was so funny that her sister was there somewhere, perhaps right near by, but still invisible.

If Greta had not been calling so steadily, perhaps she would have heard a suspicious little giggle from an overturned tub behind the gooseberry bushes; but Greta did not hear, and the old tub went on giggling so that at last it began to shake with laughter.

But King had keen ears.

"Bow-wow !" he barked, and stood suddenly still with erect ears and outspread legs. "Bow-wow !"

At this "Bow-wow," Greta pricked up her ears

TIPPING THE TUB OVER, SHE FOUND WANDA

too, and swung round to catch sight of Wanda.

King was staring at the tub.

Greta's glance passed it by, and she was about to go on hunting in another direction when she noticed that the tub moved; it looked almost as if it were about to dance !

Greta's eyes widened, and King looked as if he were afraid of ghosts.

"He-he-he ! He-he-he ! He-he-he !" came a sound from the tub, and then it began a comical dance, no doubt the first it had ever done in its life. It rocked, it jumped and jigged, and laughed as much as it had time to before Greta and King, with shrieks of joy rushed across the lawn and tipping the tub over, found Wanda, quite tired out with exertion and laughter.

All three rolled on the grass like kittens, and had such fun that they made the magpies in the trees laugh too, and made Tony lumber over to see what was going on.

"Didn't I hide well ?" asked the little "bundle",

kneeling beside her sister who lay on her back, looking up into the tree, not knowing that Wanda's mischievous fingers held half a dozen burrs with which she meant to decorate Greta's light curly hair.

"Yes, awfully well !" giggled Greta at the memory of the dancing tub. "It looked so funny, I still ache from laughing ! I thought you were sitting in an apple tree or among the peonies."

"Bah !" said Wanda, placing several burrs unnoticed close to her sister's left ear. "No, Murre,[1] I'll take care to stay away from the peonies !"

"Have you been to see Golden Heart today ?" asked Greta, who was reminded of her feathered pets by a piercing cock-a-doodle-doo from Polle out in the chickenyard.

"No, I had forgotten all about her ! Poor Golden Heart, she must be waiting for me." And hand in hand they pattered away to the chicken-coop, after they had first been to the kitchen to get grain from old Kristin.

[1] Mŭr'rĕ is a pet name of Greta's.

"Silver Heart probably thinks I don't care anything about her," wailed Greta on the way, as she thought of her pretty hen that had waited so long for her usual grain-feast.

"She'll be much angrier than my Golden Heart," said Wanda.

"Oh, no, she is never angry, only sad," Greta defended her treasure.

Now they had both reached the chicken-coop.

"Chick ! Chick !" they both called, and at the well-known voices there began an eager cackling, flapping, and running within.

"Cack, cack," came a chorus from white, black, gray, and yellow hens. The little chicks in their coops called "peep ! peep !" and looked sweet and lovable, some standing on their mother's back, others with one foot calmly in the good bran-mash, while still others ran round, peering out between the bars or trying to drink as nicely as Mistress Hen herself.

"There you are !" said Wanda, throwing a

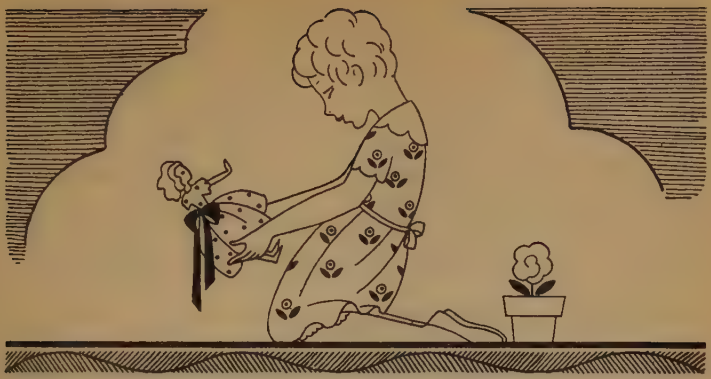
handful into the midst of the flock, "and this — only Golden Heart is going to have." And she crouched down and reached out her hand toward a beautiful yellow hen who, with a dignified air and without the least fear, came near her, and now with a trusting "cack-cack" began to pluck the grain from her palm.

Greta was chattering to Silver Heart, a white beauty with black spots, a daughter of the dignified Golden Heart who came from some very fine hen-family in a foreign country.

"Silver Heart tickles my hand so when she eats," laughed Greta.

"So does Golden Heart."

And then they went on talking to their hens. Greta confided to Silver Heart, among other things, that she was going to make herself a golden wagon and harness Kurre to it, and before Greta left, Silver Heart had been promised a part in the future journey of the golden wagon.



CHAPTER II

AUNT ANNIE COMES

It was Saturday afternoon. Broby farm looked clean and fresh; the lawns were newly mowed, the withered Maypole had been taken away, and a thick garland of oak leaves decorated the veranda, because today, visitors from Stockholm were expected. Aunt Annie was to visit them, and the children kept asking why the steamboat was so long in coming.

Father said that it was no later than it should be but this the children found hard to believe.

At last they stood in their neat, freshly-ironed, cotton dresses beside Father and Mother down on the bridge, watching so intently for the boat that the tears came into their eyes. Finally it appeared, gliding nearer and nearer, but still much too slowly for their liking.

After a while it was so near that they could distinguish a figure in a light dress waving eagerly at them. It was Miss Annie Wrete.[1]

Greta laughed out of pure delight, because she was very fond of her young aunt, and Wanda stood wondering if Auntie would have candy for her.

When the boat had docked and she had come ashore, there was a welcoming, a greeting, a kissing, and a joy almost without end. Mother and Aunt Annie had a thousand questions to ask one another, and Father chimed in with a joke now and then. Greta had taken possession of Auntie's right hand, while Wanda had to be content with carrying her parasol, which she carefully and admiringly ex-

[1] Vrā'tĕ.

amined, for it was the first time such a thing had been entrusted to her care.

Such a pretty parasol she had never seen before. It was made of soft creamy silk, which shone when one turned it, and all over the whole parasol flew butterflies, birds, and dragon flies with colorful wings, among roses, daisies, forget-me-nots, pansies, and other flowers whose names she did not know. And as if that were not enough, there was also a lovely wide silken fringe round the edge; and a silk rosette was tied on the rod, just like the rosette that was tied on Greta's little braid when she was dressed up; and way up on the rod near the handle there was a transparent red stone, to own which, Wanda thought after a few seconds, would be the greatest possible happiness.

Just suppose she had this stone — then ! — and she sighed so audibly that Aunt Annie turned round and asked smilingly if the parasol was too heavy for the little "bundle," to which Wanda, with a longing look at the shining red stone, an-

swered, "Oh, no !" in a tone of voice which meant that she could have carried at least a dozen such parasols if necessary.

"Oh, so you like the stone, do you, little kitten ?" asked Aunt Annie, who had noticed her glance.

"O-o-oh, ye-es !" assured the little kitten, with conviction, and looked so radiant that Aunt Annie could not help promising her the stone, as soon as the parasol should be worn out, (which probably would not be long, for she was always so unlucky with her parasols).

"Oh !" Wanda burst out, wishing with her whole heart that the parasol would break soon; best of all this very day.

They had now reached the house, and Aunt Annie gazed with delight at the garland of oak leaves, and above all else at dear old Broby. Tony met her with a friendly wagging of his tail, and old Kristin came out and curtseyed, wishing her welcome.

The coffee table was standing under the maples, and from the kitchen came the smell of freshly baked bread, which mingling with the fragrance from the newly cut lawns, the strawberries, and the flowers, made Aunt Annie declare that the country was a thousand times nicer than the city and that she would gladly live and die at Broby.

"Do you think that the parasol will break soon, Auntie ?" asked Wanda, who had no thought for anything else.

But Miss Wrete hoped that it would be a while before that happened.

"Well, now I must go and unpack," said Aunt Annie, after they had finished their coffee. "Are there any little folk who would like to come and help me ? Maybe there is something in my trunk that would be just right for good little girls."

She had risen and the children pulled her delightedly away to the room to which her mysterious looking trunk had been taken. Just think how much could be hidden in it ! Greta walked round

it, gazing at it with her finger in her mouth, observing and speculating, while Wanda, who had found a little hole in the lid, bored and bored with her finger to make it larger.

"Have you candy for us, Auntie ?" she asked as Miss Wrete came up with her keys in her hand.

"Maybe," she said laughing, and knelt before the trunk in order to unlock it more easily.

"How I love Auntie !" burst out Wanda, as she threw her arms round her neck, and gave her several loud kisses on the cheek.

"I wonder if it isn't the candy you really love," teased Aunt Annie.

"That too," explained Wanda, sincerely.

"You must never leave us, Auntie," Greta chimed in, and put her arms also round Auntie's neck, and hugged her hard.

"But, little ones, you're choking me !" wailed Aunt Annie, although she looked as if she liked being choked.

"There, watch now ! The lid is going up," and she turned the key.

The children's eyes widened. The lid was slowly raised.

On top lay just a white cover, then some dresses, and then a package which looked mysterious, and then another just like it.

"Now it's coming !" thought Greta, and her eyes shone.

Auntie took the packages and gave one to each child.

"Here is something I think you'll like," said she, "but open them carefully, otherwise the contents will break."

Greta stood by the table and scarcely dared touch hers, so afraid was she of hurting the unknown contents. She turned it a few times to hear if it rattled, but it did not. Yes, listen ! surely she heard a "cluck" when she turned it a certain way. Carefully she began to open the paper which was sealed in several places.

Wanda, who had taken her place in the middle of the floor trembled with eagerness. She never liked to wait, and now she began to tear at the paper without heeding Auntie's warning. She tore and pulled, but still could not get the package open. It is strange, but when one is in a hurry, it usually takes longer to open a package. Wanda had some such thought, as she grew angrier and angrier because the paper was so strong and would not break when it should. Still another good pull and she would surely do it! No, not yet! Provoked, she seized the package again and pulled with all her strength, and so succeeded in breaking it into two parts, one large and one small. Now she could look into the hole.

A piece of a doll stuck out.

She gave a shriek of joy and went on unwrapping it eagerly. Finally the doll came to light, but alas! She had only one arm!

Wanda's joy changed to sorrow.

"She has only *one* arm! Only *one* arm! Poor, poor, little doll!" she sobbed.

"Only *one* arm? Then you've pulled off the other because she certainly had two when I wrapped her up. Wait, little one, don't cry so. The arm must be here." And Aunt Annie began to hunt among the bits of paper that strewed the floor round Wanda.

"See here, just as I thought," she continued, and drew forth the poor doll's arm from the smaller package which Wanda had thrown aside. "So, little 'bundle,' be happy again; Auntie will fasten it on for you."

Wanda stopped crying and stood with her elbows resting on Auntie's knee, watching the doll-doctor with big eyes.

She felt sorry for the doll as Auntie pitilessly thrust the needle back and forth through her arm. Poor dollie, how it must hurt! But the doll was very brave; she did not make a sound but let Auntie sew her arm well.

After Wanda had fingered the stitches a few minutes and marveled at the great event, and also thanked and kissed Auntie, she ran out with the doll in her arms, followed by a radiant Greta, to show Mother, Father, the servants, Tony and King the pretty new dolls which had light curly hair, and blue eyes that could sleep. They even peeped in hastily at the playhouse and then introduced the dolls to Golden Heart and Silver Heart. Then they returned, wondering what names they should give them. And at last it was decided that Greta's doll should be called Lilly and Wanda's, Sally.

The dolls were asked if they were satisfied with their names, and as they made no objection the children supposed that they liked them.

"I'll help you to sew clothes for them," promised Aunt Annie, when they came into her room again to watch the rest of the unpacking. "See, I've brought a lot of pretty pieces of cloth for dresses, coats, and aprons," and she spread out a great many colored bits before them.

The girls were elated and nudged each other softly to call attention to one or another piece of pretty cloth. There was some light blue which Greta liked best, while Wanda liked a bright red silk with yellow dots that looked like peas. But there was a flowered silk ribbon which they both wanted. Auntie settled the question by cutting the piece in half. Afterward followed a long talk about doll dresses, and then Auntie went on unpacking.

"Here is something from Grandmother," said she, giving each one a string of blue beads with a gold fastening. "And here is something else she sent, something very useful and pretty."

This was a little sewing box for each one; sweet little sewing boxes with real locks and keys.

"In these boxes there is something very remarkable," went on Aunt Annie, looking mysterious. "In the lid of each box sits . . . well, isn't it funny ? There sits the king's monkey !"

"The king's little monkey ?" said Wanda, wonderingly.

"Look now !" said Auntie, lifting the lid.

Both had their eyes wide open to look at the king's little monkey, which they had never heard of before, and both were quite taken aback when they found a remarkable likeness between it and the girls in the water, to whom they nodded daily.

"Usch, Auntie !" piped Wanda, and Greta thought it was so funny that she laughed aloud.

"Well, isn't the little monkey pretty ?" wondered Auntie; and Greta answered a little doubtfully that Auntie should see for herself. Then Auntie smiled and said that Greta was a little rogue.

After the boxes and the necklaces had been shown and admired, Aunt Annie promised to let the children show her next day the garden, the playhouse, the flowers, the chicken-coop, and everything else there was to see.

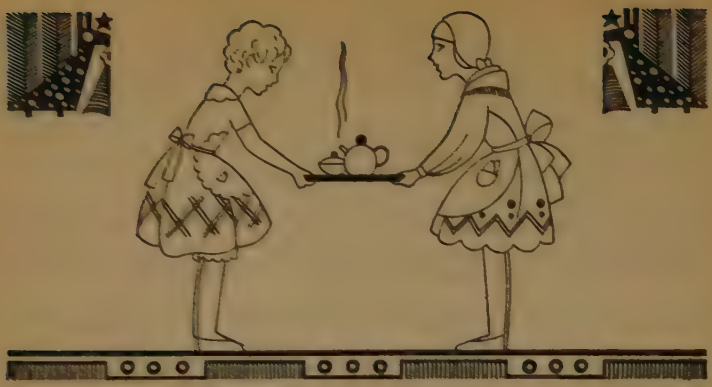
It had been a happy day, they both thought

when they went to bed. They were going to get up early next morning to set *Golden Star Castle* in order, and Mother had promised them that they might serve coffee there for Aunt Annie. But Auntie did not know anything about that yet; they were going to surprise her with the invitation when everything was ready. Could one think of anything that would be more fun ?

And also for two weeks they would not have study hours or work periods.

They had much to plan and think of that evening, and when the sandman had come and opened his gaily colored umbrella over them, there rained from it golden wagons, Kurres, dolls, story books, sewing boxes, and Aunt Annie.

The very funniest though, was when Greta found Father in Auntie's trunk and when King sat in her own chair and read her lesson to Tony, who wore spectacles on his nose, just like the woman in the picture book.



CHAPTER III

A COFFEE PARTY AT GOLDEN STAR CASTLE

THE DOOR of the playhouse was standing wide open. Greta and Wanda, dressed in big aprons, were busily cleaning. They had swept, dusted, and rearranged things so that everything would be fresh and pretty when Auntie made her visit to *Golden Star Castle.*

First Wanda had swept, and then Greta had swept, and then they had run down into the garden to pick flowers while the dust settled.

Today the rose bushes did not have special pro-

tection, because the girls had permission to pick all sorts of flowers, except Mother's favorite dark red roses.

But it was just those roses which Wanda wanted most; they would look so pretty in the crystal vase on the table.

Surely Mother would not be angry ! Perhaps she would not even notice if she took one rose!

Wanda stepped closer to the rose bush and looked at it a while with her finger in her mouth.

She looked round, but no one was in sight.

The fragrant roses bent softly, as if they wished to say, "Well, Wanda, pick us then; don't you see how pretty we are ? Hurry !"

She took one step more and came so close to them that she had only to stretch out her nose in order to bury it among the petals, and know that they smelled sweeter than any of the other roses in the garden.

Should she, or should she not ?

Her hand reached out, and she had already

taken hold of a stalk to break it off, when she happened to see a slender, little, silver ring which she wore on her middle finger because it was too big for her other finger.

"My little girl," Mother had said when she had given it to her, "my little girl, when you see this ring, remember that you must try to be good and obedient, so that God and good people will like you. And when you are thinking of doing something wrong, look at the ring, think of Mother, and change your mind."

Wanda drew back her hand, glanced at the ring a moment, looked happy because she had not picked the rose, and turned round.

There behind her stood Mother, looking at her!

"Oh, Mother!" said she, turning very red. "But I didn't take any, though I thought . . ."

And then she told Mother all about it.

Mother said nothing. She only stroked Wanda's hair, looked at her, and gave her a kiss which made her so light-hearted that she warbled and

sang as she ran from bush to bush gathering flowers, and then returned to *Golden Star Castle* with a rich harvest.

"Dust now, Wandis," requested Greta. "I am going to make bouquets."

Wanda dusted carefully, and did not leave one speck on the furniture.

The table was dragged out into the middle of the floor, and Greta opened the cupboard doors.

Oh, how the inside of the cupboard doors did shine when the sun peeped in and was reflected in their dear little coffee pot. It was made of a yellowish metal and had a black handle and a spout which Wanda had almost spoiled by stuffing peas in it and then pouring water over them. The peas had swelled and it was a long time before they could get them out again. Standing against the wall behind the coffee pot, was a tray. It looked as if it were of silver. At least it was of white metal and it shone. Six pairs of white cups decorated with gold edges and forget-me-nots, were

tipped upside down. A sugar bowl and a cream pitcher, also of white metal, stood beside the cups, and half a dozen small spoons lay wrapped in tissue paper.

This coffee set was the children's pride, and was used only on birthdays, name-days, and other great occasions. But Mother wanted them to have it in their own care, so they would learn to be careful.

Greta washed and dried it herself, and as yet nothing had happened to any of the little cups.

Wanda got out a big white napkin which Mother had given them to use as a table-cloth, and spread it on the table, while Greta went round putting flowers in all possible corners.

One bouquet must of course be put in the vase on the table, and one must be tied with string to Father's chair, one to Mother's, and one to Auntie's.

Wanda walked round the table looking at the cloth.

It would not lie smooth. Sometimes a long

corner hung down on one side, sometimes on the other.

It was very provoking, thought Wanda.

She tried again, but still it hung crookedly. She became angry and cross, scolded the cloth, and jerked one corner. Then it hung longest on that side.

Wanda's patience was almost at an end. Little "gunpowder," as Father called her when she was cross, was about to explode.

"*Will* you stay straight, stupid cloth!" she cried and gave it still another jerk.

No, the cloth did not seem to want to; it slipped down on the floor.

Wanda stamped her foot, grew red, and ran away to cool off alone.

"She's probably sitting over at the brook sputtering," thought Greta, letting her go, because she knew it would soon be over.

In a little while, sure enough, Wanda came back. By that time Greta had already set the

table and was going to the kitchen to have the coffee pot filled.

"Isn't it nice, Wandis ?" asked Greta, looking at the pretty coffee table.

"Oh, my, yes !" exclaimed Wanda, who was now all sunshine. "I'll carry the bread basket and the cream pitcher," she proposed.

"Yes, but don't drop them !"

"Why should I drop them ?" she wondered, certain that such a thing could not happen.

And then they ran the back way to the kitchen, so that Auntie should not see them and suspect anything.

Kristin, who was very fond of the children, had, with Mother's permission, baked a real party-cake, and a great many small, small biscuits and ginger cookies, which made Wanda's mouth water; and as she and the bread basket went together to *Golden Star Castle*, a few of these sweet little cookies did wander into Wanda's mouth where they were well received. The coffee was poured

into the pot, and Mother came out and surprised them with a basket of splendid, freshly picked strawberries. Yes, there was going to be a really big party at *Golden Star Castle*, and the dolls, Lilly and Sally, were going to be there too, although they had to appear in very flimsy dresses.

After Kristin had helped them carry all the delicacies to the playhouse, everything was ready. Greta and Wanda ran, or rather flew, to invite Father and Aunt Annie, who were both very much surprised and at once promised to come. Auntie had to dress up a bit, she said, and a little later she came, enveloped in an old net shawl, wearing long gloves, and a pretty necklace, and was perfectly delighted with everything they had to show her in *Golden Star Castle*. She praised the coffee, the dishes, the strawberries, and especially the candy-pictures on the walls.

Father declared at first that he did not dare sit on one of their small chairs, but at last he did, and said that he was very comfortable.

Greta poured the coffee, and got on very well, she thought, because she made only three coffee spots on the table-cloth and knocked over the cream pitcher only once; but as it was then nearly empty, that did not matter. She ran to Kristin and had it filled again.

Wanda tripped about with the bread basket, curtseyed, and offered her wares repeatedly.

"Yes, do you know, little ones, I'm coming often to see you in the playhouse and ask for coffee or something else that's good," said Aunt Annie, biting a giant strawberry in half.

"We don't have coffee every day, only sometimes," said Greta, offering her another cup.

"That's too bad," declared Auntie, drinking her third cup.

How good the coffee did taste out of the little cups with the forget-me-nots! Greta offered them still another cup but no one wanted more, and Father said that the coffee was so strong that he did not dare drink more.

It was close and warm in the playhouse, even with the door open, and after the guests had thanked the small hostesses, they said good-bye.

Father, Mother, and Auntie sat down under the maples, where there was cool shade, and Father read aloud.

The children, who had much to do, put on their big aprons; Kristin carried out warm water and a towel, and then began the dish washing. But first they ate all the little ginger cookies and licked the bowl which held the strawberries.

Wanda also wanted to wash the dishes, and at last, when Greta gave in, they both took their places at the basin and played tag with each other's hands in the water so that it spattered and splashed up into their faces.

"Be careful of the cups!" cried Greta, dismayed, as Wanda pushed them together and they heard a crash.

"Oh, Wanda, why did you break it?" wailed Greta, who sobbingly tried to piece together the

bits of the poor cup which had been crushed.

"It broke itself, I didn't break it," and Wanda looked a little regretfully at the pieces and then took them out of her sister's hands.

"This is the way they were," she said.

"Yes," Greta said, watching her.

"Now you can wash the dishes alone," decided Wanda, who thought she had done enough. "I'm going down to see Golden Heart, and I'll tell her that you are coming later."

And so she ran off and left Greta to clean up the playhouse alone.

CHAPTER IV

WANDA AND GRETA TEACH THE HENS TO MARCH

TROM, TROM, TROMTROM, TROM — was heard from the farmyard, and between these sounds some queer, trembling, ugly tones, mixed now and then with a cack-cack-cack.

Miss Wrete, who was sitting in her room writing letters, ran to the window to see what was going on.

It was a strange procession that was passing her window.

First came Wanda and Greta, with their hat brims turned up, and trimmed with tufts of grass, and following them came the whole fowl family, except the little chicks who of course were locked up in their own little coops.

Wanda had a tin cup hanging upside down by a string round her neck and she was drumming on it with two thick sticks of wood as hard as she could.

Greta had a comb covered with tissue paper, an instrument which was used a great deal by the Borg children. She was playing her prettiest as they marched by Auntie's window, and when it tickled her mouth too much she took the comb away and sang.

"We'll sing the march. We'll sing the march. We'll sing the march, the march, the march, the march, we will !" And Wanda chimed in with a word now and then.

Steadily and bravely they marched by, the chickens following in a long line, tramping on each other's toes in their eagerness to reach their leaders

IT WAS A STRANGE PROCESSION

and get the grain with which they had been lured away from the calm of the chickenyard.

Even Polle had let himself be fooled into coming, or maybe it was only that he wanted to come along to see that the hens behaved properly.

In any case, it was lucky for the rooster that King was not near. If he had known, as he lay in his corner in *Golden Star Castle,* that there were so many creatures to bark at and scare the life out of out on the Broby grounds, he would not have slept quite so peacefully. Head after head peeped out from the windows, and drew back grinning. In the kitchen there was great amusement.

Tony, on the steps, looked embarrassed and let the procession pass by untouched. He only drew down his tail and looked at Mr. Borg who had come out on the steps, as if he wanted to ask what was thought of this thing — if he should drive them away or not. But when he saw that he was laughing, he lowered his ears and smiled and waved his big tail so that one poor hen was frightened half

out of her wits, shrieked "cack," and jumped right over several of her friends.

Greta saluted Father with the comb.

"Very good, my brave little generals of the Hen Army," said he, presenting arms with the walking stick he had in his hand. "Very well marched, but in the future I'd rather you kept your army marches in the farmyard. Take your men back to the chickenyard now, close the gate carefully and hurry back, because the dinner bell will ring in five minutes."

CHAPTER V

GRETA'S DREAM

GRETA WAS standing alone down on the cape with a little fishing rod in her hand waiting for a bite. She stared so hard at the float that her eyes smarted, and every time a little wave made it rock, she thought she felt a nibble.

Any number of times she drew up her line to look, but the biscuit dough was untouched. She spit on the bait, for luck, as she had seen fishermen do, and cast out her line again.

It was warm down there on the cape.

For a long time it had been fun to stand there and wait, but at last it grew tiresome.

If they would only bite !

Greta had almost seen herself offering fresh fish, which she herself had caught, for dinner, but the fish would not come.

The sun beat down and the water glittered so that her head grew heavy. There was a murmur in the juniper bushes and fir trees behind her, almost as if some one were whispering.

In the big stone up on the hill she knew that the fairies lived. Lisen,[1] the daughter of the fisherman who lived in the little hut, had told her about them. Lisen had seen the fairies dancing in the evening after the moon had risen and the dew was glistening on the grass. Greta had also seen the fireflies, the fairies' lanterns, but the fairies themselves she had never seen.

[1] Lee'sen.

Lisen had promised that some evening when the moon was shining she would take her along and let her see them dancing. If only Mother would let her go . . . !

Bite !

She cried out with delight and pulled up her line.

A poor little fish was wriggling on the hook but soon let go. Greta was not slow in catching it; she took it in her hand and threw it hard against a stone, so that it died and did not suffer. After she had looked at it a few minutes she thought that the little fish was just the right size for the fairies. She would give it to them !

Greta laid aside the rod, ran hurriedly up the hill to the playhouse to get a toy pail, and then off at top speed down the hill.

The fish now lay in the pail, and with it in her hand she crept up to the big stone, way at the top of the hill, where juniper and wild rose bushes

stood in a cluster and gave her several pricks as she squeezed between them; but she paid no attention to that.

She was busy wondering what it looked like inside the big stone.

Of course there must be long pillared halls and a ceiling of pure gold glittering with gems. If only she could see it just once !

"The big stone" was really two stones. One was flat on the underside and rested against the other so that an arch was formed underneath. This made the most wonderful stone vestibule for the fairies, and must of course be the entrance.

Greta stared at the stone, knocked, and listened for some sign from those who lived within, but she heard only the wind sighing softly through the bushes, the birds twittering, and the crickets singing their monotonous song.

She sat down on the ground and stuck her head curiously under the arch. It felt cool and damp

inside. She wondered if she dared creep in and leave the pail.

She put her head in still farther and half expected to see some one, when she was boldly forcing herself in on them in this way.

But no one appeared.

Dared she creep in ? Just suppose they became angry and let the stone tumble down on her ! O-oh ! She shivered and drew back. But why should they be angry when she came here to give them the fish?

Dear me, no, it couldn't be dangerous.

Greta took courage and dropping down on all fours, crept resolutely in under the stone.

A few thin ferns were growing in the crack.

About in the center of the stone which lay as a support for the arch, she saw a hole or depression between the arch and the stone wall.

That must be their door !

Greta felt very strange and did not know

whether she was happy or frightened, or perhaps both.

She knocked softly on the wall and whispered in a mysterious voice. All the time she felt little shivers down her spine and was uncertain as to what was going to happen next, because, though she believed that the fairies had great power, she was not certain whether they were good or bad.

"It is only I, dear fairies! Please take this!" She set the toy pail beside the opening, and waited a while breathlessly; but nothing happened. Then she drew slowly back into the sunlight.

Greta put on her hat, which she had left outside, and sat down in the grass, keeping very still so that she should not scare those who were coming for the fish.

She sat with her back toward the stone but could not help turning round every second to cast a glance inside. She kept thinking that she heard light little footsteps or the rustle of a thin dress

against the stone. But always it was nothing but the wind moving the blades of grass or whirling a fallen leaf, and when it touched the stone wall it sounded like a soft sigh. But it was only the wind after all !

How long Greta sat there, deep in her own thoughts, it is hard to say. The sun beat steadily down, and the splashing of the waves on the shore became at last a sort of cradle song. The fragrance of wild roses and meadow-sweet enveloped her, her eyelids grew heavier and heavier.

"Suus-suus," whispered the wind. "Sissi-sissi-si," said the crickets. "Kvivirr, kvivirr, kvitt !" sang the birds and the waves continued to fall softly against the beach.

Greta's head fell lower, and her eyes closed.

She slept beside the fairy stone, in the fragrance of flowers, the lapping of waves, and the song of birds; and all these bring beautiful dreams.

She heard a sound like distant music; she listened with smiling lips and wondered what it could

be, when she noticed a sudden murmuring sound above her head.

She looked up.

There she saw a beautiful dragon fly, much bigger and more beautiful than ordinary dragon flies. It shimmered and sparkled with brilliant colors, so that at first she stared at it amazed and did not notice the little creature who sat on its back, guiding it with a golden rein.

At every movement of the dragon fly's wings, they sparkled like electric lights.

"Good day, Greta," said the little airy being, as the dragon fly alighted beside her.

Greta dared not answer; she only smiled and gazed.

"Are you afraid of me ?" said the tiny, clear voice which sounded like the twitter of birds, and smiling, the little figure stood up on the dragon fly's back so that Greta could really see her.

She was dressed in some thin, white material, as transparent as mist and shimmering like pearls

of dew and moonlight. Her long curls were like Greta's doll's, and a little silver crown with a sparkling bluish star adorned her forehead.

"You see, Greta, I am the Queen of the Fairies," she went on, and raising the golden wand, which she held in her hand, she softly touched Greta, who felt all her fear disappearing.

"Are you the Queen of the Fairies ?" she said, wonderingly. "Oh, I have longed for you so, for such a long time."

"I know, and that is why I have come. If you had been a naughty child I should never have come; and if you had not loved the woods, the sea, the flowers, and the birds, you would never have seen me. Because, you see, naughty children have a sort of veil over their eyes which keeps them from seeing anything pretty. And those children who do not love great and beautiful Nature can never see me, never see any of the fairies. They do not see us nodding at them from the flowers, grass, and leaves; they do not see us flying

round on sunbeams, dragon flies, and butterflies; they hear, but they do not know that we sing with the birds in the woods, that we whisper to them in the wind, and dance over the sea at night when the moon is up and the mist sweeps over the water. But you will learn to know it, Greta, because you are a good child."

"Oh, I am often mischievous and bad," sighed Greta remorsefully.

"It happens sometimes," nodded the Fairy Queen in answer, "but you are soon sorry and try to correct your faults. No one is free from faults, my child, and do not forget that we should forgive others much and ourselves nothing. Do you understand me, Greta ?"

"Yes, I think so; Mother has told me that too," she whispered.

The little queen moved her wand through the air.

"Look round you !" she commanded.

Greta obeyed the command and looked round

amazed. From every flower a little smiling face nodded at her. Dainty, little figures swung on blades of grass and leaves. Here were two helping an ant drag a straw to her hill; there was another giving a forgotten drop of dew to a thristy butterfly; here was another straightening up a trampled blade of grass. One had hidden on a swallow's back and threw kisses to Greta as the swallow flew past. Another sat curled up on a burdock leaf, telling stories to a sick beetle.

Everywhere there was life and movement, and every one seemed to know her, because from all sides came whispering voices.

"Good day, Greta ! Welcome, Greta !"

"May Wanda see you too ?" she asked pleadingly, after she had looked about for a while.

"Maybe, when she is bigger, she will learn to know us, the little spirits of Nature," answered the Fairy Queen, mounting her dragon fly again.

"Oh, don't go, don't go !" begged Greta, stretching out her arms toward her.

"Don't be afraid, you will never lose us, although you will never see us again as you do now," she smiled in answer. "Just love Nature and Him above," she said and raised her arms with a humble movement to the clear blue heavens. "Don't forget this, child, and you will always be welcome in our wonderful fairy world."

She nodded, took the fairy reins, and the dragon fly rose into the air. Greta watched its sparkling wings until it had disappeared in the distance. Then she drew a deep sigh, almost a sob, and woke up.

She sat up, rubbed her eyes, and looked round. The dream was vividly before her. Where was the Fairy Queen ? Where were all the other little creatures who had just been nodding to her ?

"You will never lose us, although you will not see us as you do now," the Fairy Queen had said.

She looked closely at smiling flowers and leaves, and thought that the fairies were nodding at her from them. She nodded back, broke off a wild

rose and put it into her sash, brushed her hair back from her forehead, and stood up.

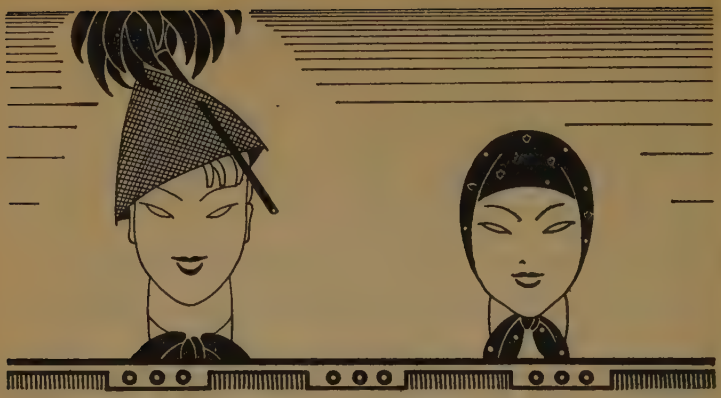
Then she remembered the pail in the stone arch.

She crept in to look.

She could hardly believe her eyes. There lay the pail, tipped over, and the fish gone. They had really come for it after all !

Greta's heart beat fast.

To think that they had really taken her fish ! Because no one else could possibly have taken it; of that she was perfectly sure. Greta could not know that it was the fisherman's black cat who had enjoyed her little fish. She lives today in the belief that it was the fairies in the stone who came for it.



CHAPTER VI

THE UGLY BOY, THE LITTLE PEASANT GIRL, AND THE CHILD IN THE CHECKED DRESS

As King was lying on his cushion in the nursery, sunk in happy midday slumber, Wanda stuck her head through the door as if she were looking for something.

"Yes, Murre, he's on his cushion," she called to her sister, who was standing behind her, trying to look in through the crack.

Both ran tittering into the room, and poor King was not allowed to take his nap in peace. He

stretched himself and yawned so that his jaws were as far apart as they possibly could be, and his little red tongue curled upward like a shaving.

"Ugh, but he's sleepy !" said Greta, throwing aside a large bundle which she carried under her arm. Wanda, too, freed herself from a similar bundle. The door closed, and they strode solemnly over to King, who was watching them with sleepy, half-open eyes.

"He-he-he !" giggled Greta.

"Ha-ha-ha !" answered Wanda, and then they began to tear open their bundles.

They had just been up in the attic with Mother, watching her setting the big piece-drawer in order. A pair of checked, home-made bathing trousers which had been Father's, awoke a lively desire in Greta to dress up as a boy, and she begged and coaxed so for those old trousers that she finally got them, although Mother declared she would be afraid of her in that costume.

That big piece-drawer was great fun ! In one

corner they found a red bodice with gold lace, and a white blouse to go with it. Mother had worn that once when she was a little girl. That bodice took Wanda's eye.

Besides there was a light blue-checked cotton blouse which Greta had had four years ago, some baby caps, and a little shirt which had been Wanda's in her first year of life. All this, with a few other things, they had found and now they were going to have some fun.

After they had closed the nursery door, they were very quiet. Only a suppressed laugh now and then and a few growls from King were heard.

But at last the door opened, and a quite different company came out from that which had last passed the nursery threshold. Greta and Wanda had disappeared entirely. Maybe they had run away to hide, because they were afraid of these strange people.

First came a boy wearing green-checked trousers

wide enough to harbor two such boys. A big shapeless cotton coat hung on his shoulders, so that he looked like a scarecrow, and then, to give the finishing touch, there was a hat made of paper, with a feather duster at the top. The strange-looking boy stepped solemnly through the door, and behind him tripped a little peasant girl. She wore a red bodice, and a black skirt, and tied on her head was a shawl, very much like Mother's handkerchiefs and marked L. B.

But the very strangest person was without doubt the one carried on the boy's arm. It looked like a dear little baby in a blue-checked cotton dress with a turned down collar and a white baby cap. But when the baby turned round so that one saw his face, one might easily be frightened because it was covered with a long, thick, brownish hair which stuck out sharply against the white cap. And sometimes he yawned or ran out his tongue swiftly or growled !

Aunt Annie, who was sitting in the living room

at the piano, singing, turned round when she heard the door open, and the notes stuck in her throat when she caught sight of the visitors. First she opened her eyes wide, and then she burst out laughing.

At this well-known sound something began to move eagerly back and forth under the child's blue-checked dress, and after a while a shaggy, brown tail managed to work itself out into daylight, and the head in the baby cap seemed to smile, and said, "Bow-wow !"

"Are Greta and Wanda at home ?" asked the boy, with a voice as harsh and coarse as if it came up from the cellar.

Aunt Annie looked frightened.

"No-o-o," she said, trembling and curtseying.

"Well, where are they then ?" said the same voice.

"Well, you know Wanda and Greta are such mischievous, troublesome, and unmanageable girls that one never knows where they are ! I sup-

pose they are up to some prank again," explained Auntie.

"Hmm !" said the boy who did not seem satisfied with this answer.

"Oh, I think they are good," said the little peasant girl, coming a step nearer. "We'd like to play with them."

"Then perhaps I may ask the lady and gentleman to step down to the chicken-coop, because they are probably there," suggested Miss Wrete.

"Good-bye, then !" said the boy in the checked trousers, opening the door, but at this movement the child jumped down and ran on all fours, out through the vestibule, down the steps and out into the yard, where he frightened poor Mother who was just coming down from the attic and did not know what was going on.

Father, who was sitting in the swing reading, thought it so funny to see the blue-checked creature darting about that he laughed until he ached.

Tony, who was lying lazily on the steps, jumped

up as he came flying toward him, and stood staring suspiciously at the child.

Kristin looked out from the kitchen window, and soon the other servants also stuck out their heads. They all laughed heartily. Tony lowered his tail in embarrassment at all this laughter, looked a little offended, and sat down beside his master.

The boy and the peasant girl finally caught the runaway, who had tangled himself up in his dress, and after every one in the house had seen the three strangers, they disappeared to hunt for Greta and Wanda.

MOTHER, where are you going ? May I go too ?" called Wanda, as she saw her mother going toward the farmyard, and hurried breathlessly after her.

"Yes, come along, little 'bundle' ! I'm only going to the chicken-coop to see about the sick chick."

"Then I can take my paper cuttings with me.

Wait, Mother dear, I'll just run in after the basket."

"I'll walk ahead slowly," answered Mrs. Borg. "But don't run now so that you drop it all."

"No, I won't."

Wanda had already reached the steps and now ran eagerly up into the nursery.

She was in such a hurry and was so afraid that her mother would reach the chicken-coop before her that she did not take time to think where she had put the basket. She just whirled about all over the room.

At last she saw it on the bureau, and then she and the basket were off at express train speed.

Just suppose Mother were already there !

Yes, there she was near the chicken-coop but when she heard Wanda's cry she stopped to wait for her.

Wanda did not take time to go the ordinary way over the little foot-bridge; she wanted to take a short cut over the lawn. The wide brook did not

worry her; she did not have time to think of it before she was upon it; she just ran.

Mrs. Borg, who saw her short cut, called to her to turn round and follow the footpath, but Wanda would not listen. She had only to jump over the brook, and then she would be there.

Now the brook yawned before her. She did not even stop to gather momentum, she just jumped, and splash ! the water flew up over the shrieking, kicking Wanda.

It must have been the most unpleasant bath she had ever had, because she screamed so that it could be heard way out on the road, and the village children came running to find out what had happened. Yes, even after Mother had pulled her out, she still screamed. She was all spattered with mud too.

Wanda's whole face was covered with clay, and she had had several horrid mouthfuls of it too. It was not strange that Wanda shrieked so that she could be heard way out on the road.

And besides, the village children saw her standing there, dripping and miserable! Wanda felt ashamed when Kalle[1] nudged Stina,[2] pointed at her, and ran away to laugh behind the stone wall.

Father, Auntie, Greta, Kristin, yes, every one saw her, and a pitiable sight she was as she came up the hill.

King barked; he did not want to admit he knew her.

Two whole hours passed before she was again able to show herself. She had to be scrubbed and washed and rinsed, declared Kristin, who called her a little pig, for it was really no easy thing to get her clean again.

The basket of paper cuttings lay in the brook, and there it probably is to this day.

One could not wonder at Wanda's being in a bad humor that day. Every one laughed at her, and Father asked her several times if the little

[1] Kàl'lĕ.
[2] Stee'nà.

"clay cuckoo" had a good time in the brook.

"Clay cuckoo !" That hurt her. She stayed by herself as much as she could. Most of the time she sat pouting in the nursery, wanting to be let alone; but as there was no bolt on the door, it could not be locked, and Greta ran in and out.

At last she found a way.

The bureau stood near the door; so near that if a drawer were pulled out the door could not be opened, because the drawer was in the way. Wanda pulled out *all* the drawers; now no one could come in and she could pout in peace.

After an hour, the drawers were closed, and the little "clay cuckoo" appeared among the others, just as they were ready to start for a walk in the woods.

"Mother, may I go too ? I'll walk ever so carefully." And when she had permission to go too, she ran after her hat, and took Aunt Annie's proffered hand happily.

At first she was quiet and tripped along at Miss

Wrete's side with a chastened air. But soon the clouds over Wanda's spirits broke, and she began to chatter, laugh, ask questions, and hop about as usual.

The road through the woods was pretty and shady, and in the hills there lived the nicest echo man one could wish.

If one called "Greta" once, the echo answered "Greta, Greta, Greta" so clearly and plainly that one would think there was some one hidden there, calling back. Father suggested that they go to Outlook Hill.

"Yes, let's go to Outlook Hill," agreed Mother, drawing her skirts together to step over a little rill which trickled down from the hills.

Aunt Annie borrowed Father's walking stick to have some support, Mother took his arm, and Wanda hopped along beside them, trying unsuccessfully to catch the smoke rings from his cigar. Greta had run on ahead.

They stopped sometimes to look about and to

get their breath, and Aunt Annie declared pantingly that it was a great exertion for Stockholm girls to climb about in the Broby hills.

But Father said jokingly that it was very healthy, and that Aunt Annie was in his debt because he taught her to climb hills.

When they reached the plateau at the top of the hill, Auntie was delighted with the beautiful view. The bay was spread out before them, and islet after islet rose green and lovely out of the blue water, which was calm now toward evening, and mirrored the sky, the shores, and the cottages.

Mother suggested that Aunt Annie, who was an artist, should send for her painting materials and paint the view from the top of the hill.

She promised to do so, and Father hoped that she would have the picture finished for his name-day, which would come in about a month.

CHAPTER VII

AN EXCURSION

Mr. Borg had gone to town and was going to be away a whole week on business. Greta and Wanda had promised him to be very good so that Mother would not be unhappy while he was away. The first day seemed desolate without him, especially at meals when his chair stood empty, and also when they came from their baths without being tossed into the air.

"Laura, today we must have some fun," said

Aunt Annie, one day, as they finished breakfast. "Couldn't we go out to sea, we four ? And row to the other shore to pick wild strawberries or mushrooms in the woods ?"

To the children's great delight, Mrs. Borg gave her consent.

"Give me the keys, Laura dear," said Aunt Annie, "and let me get everything ready ! Just give me full control of the pantry, and I'll be satisfied. You small folk might carry down shawls, cushions, and parasols to the boat."

Wanda and Greta ran about joyfully in each other's way, trudging down with all the shawls, cushions, and parasols they could find.

An hour had passed, and they were ready to be off. The little, slender, white-painted keel-boat, which was called *Snipan* [1] lay rocking near the boathouse. *Snipan* was easy to row and was therefore best for their excursion, for they were

[1] Snee'pàn.

going to row themselves; none of the servants were to come along, declared Aunt Annie.

Aunt Annie was to be captain on *Snipan*. She was standing on the pier in a dark blue sailor blouse, inspecting her ship with a commander's eye. The children were told to climb down into the boat carefully and sit still, after they were on board, because *Snipan* was very unsteady and tipped easily.

Greta, who was eager to get out on the water, tumbled down and came near rolling over the gunwale; but luckily Mother caught her arm and helped her right herself. Wanda, on the other hand, climbed in slowly and carefully, while Auntie held her hand.

When they were all on board, Auntie took the oars. Tony and King who had both been on the bridge to say good-bye, looked sad, and King made several unsuccessful attempts to jump into the boat.

Old Kristin gave the boat a push to make the

start easier, the children cheered and waved, and Kristin, Tony, and King waved too, in different ways.

Greta had used the time before they started to trim the boat with birch branches and meadow-sweet, and the effect was very pretty and festive, as *Snipan* glided out of the Broby cove. Wanda sat beside Mother in the stern and Greta just opposite Aunt Annie, who sang one song after another as she rowed forward. A gay spirit reigned on board the noble viking ship, *Snipan*.

Mrs. Borg told fairy tales and stories, Auntie sang, and made them laugh at her efforts to be a captain, and the children chattered, both at the same time.

When at last a bag of candy rained down into Wanda's lap, the spirit on board grew still more lively.

Rower, let the oars rest, good rower, good rower,
And let the boat drift, good rower, good rower.

sang Auntie, rowing and keeping time to the music.

Wanda, who was now busy sucking on her candy, was quiet for a while, and amused herself by letting her right hand drag through the water, which felt so nice and warm that she almost wanted to go in for a bath.

"It must be awfully deep here," said Greta, leaning over the edge of the boat to see if she could see the bottom of the sea, and making the viking ship rock so that Wanda gave a frightened cry and almost choked on a hard piece of candy.

"It is so deep here that all of Broby could be hidden without our seeing even a chimney sticking up," Mother answered Greta's question.

"Oh !" burst out Greta, marveling, and began at once to wonder if there wasn't a Broby down there on the bottom.

"Do you think anyone lives down there, mamma ?" she asked.

"Yes, all the fishes, of course," answered Wanda, who was resting a while from her candy-

eating, "all the fishes and snails and crabs."

"I mean others, pretty ones," and she looked dreamily out across the sea.

"Have you heard the story about the little mermaid ?" asked Aunt Annie. "No ? Well, then I'll tell it to you." And she let the oars rest and began to tell about the little mermaid with the long wavy hair and eyes like bright stars, and of how she used to rock in the waves, and play with them; about the Sea King's castle at the bottom of the sea; about how the little mermaid saved the prince and then let the old witch have her clear voice so that she herself could have human form and be near the prince, and how she died at last and became one of the daughters of the air (all of which one may read in the beautiful fairy book by the great Danish story teller, Hans Christian Andersen).

Auntie had begun to row again slowly as she talked, and the children, especially Greta, scarcely dared breathe for fear of missing a single word.

Wanda's attention was divided between the story and the candy.

"Oh, how pretty !" said Greta softly, as Auntie finished, and began rowing the boat faster again.

Now they were near the opposite shore.

"At last, we near our goal !" exclaimed Aunt Annie joyfully. "Greetings, friendly uninhabited island !" she went on, and pulled hard at the oars in order to let the boat glide into land afterward.

"But Auntie, look !" cried Greta. "The uninhabited island isn't uninhabited at all !" and she pointed to some cows who were feeding along the shore behind the alder bushes and watching *Snipan* and its crew with wonder.

"Ugh !" cried Auntie, who was afraid of cows. "Ugh ! No, never in the world will I go ashore there to be gored to death and thrown into the air like a rubber ball ! Save me from such company !" and she made the most absurd motions with the oars in order to get away from the land quickly. She scratched, splashed, rowed, and

backed, at the same time looking so funny that Mother grew weak with laughter. A friendly cow who seemed to want to know them better, stepped politely down to the very shore to wish them welcome, stretched out her head, and said, "Mo-o-o-o !"

Greta and Wanda, who were not afraid of the peaceful cow, wished to give her a piece of bread, but Aunt Annie, who did not understand her friendliness, managed to get the boat off the sandy bottom and did not stop rowing until she felt she was far away from the terrible wild animal, as she called the cow.

"Yes," she said, "I like cows in their stalls in the barn, when they are well tied, and I like cows in pictures, too. There they look so cozy that one likes having them even in the house. But out here in the open !"

Luckily they found a fence that went all the way down to the water and so separated them from the cows, and after they had found a suitable landing

place and the boat had been fastened and all had come ashore, Aunt Annie threw herself down on the grass and declared that she could not move from the spot — no, not if the whole woods were full of wild animals, she was so tired.

"Yes, indeed, rowing is strenuous," said Mother, nodding at Auntie. "You must rest now, while we get the lunch ready in some pretty place. It will be fun to see what you found in my pantry."

Aunt Annie answered smilingly that her conscience was not quite clear, because she had taken everything she found. Wanda and Greta thought that Auntie was a dear, and patted her delightedly, saying that they liked her awfully.

"Gluttons !" she answered, pinching Wanda, who was within reach. Wanda cried out like a little pig, and ran laughing to Mother, who was opening the lunch basket, and asked for something good to eat.

"Later," answered Mrs. Borg, and Wanda went

hopping down to the beach, pouting and a little cross.

Greta had seized the chance, when Aunt Annie moved, to sit down close to her.

"Auntie dear, Father says my lap is a good pillow, and I can sit still, as long as you like," said she.

"Thank you, little Murre," answered Aunt Annie pleasantly, and she laid her head in Greta's lap, closed her eyes, and was soon asleep.

Poor Greta's legs began to feel very queer because of her uncomfortable position. Oh, what a creeping and a tickling! And yet she dared not move for fear Auntie might wake up.

"Oh, Wandis, my legs have gone to sleep, and they hurt so!" she whispered to her sister, who had found a fine long reed and was bending it into a funny sort of swan, as Kristin had taught her to do.

"Do they?" said Wanda, without sympathy, putting a stick right through the swan to hold it

together. "It is so funny when it tickles in your legs. Why don't you think it is funny ?"

And then she went on with her swan, whose neck threatened to be too long. It was nearly as long as half of Wanda herself, but Wanda knew a cure for that; she bit off the head and a piece of the neck and made a new head.

Then there was quiet for a while. Greta's legs grew so numb that at last she hardly felt them at all.

She sat still, looking sometimes round her, sometimes at Aunt Annie. Nearby, grew some blue flowers, which she would have liked to have, but they were too far away. Wanda had gone down nearer the beach and could not hear her unless she called and then Auntie would have wakened. The more she looked at the flowers, the prettier they became. At this distance it looked as if they were looking at her with friendly little faces, just like that time at the fairy stone. And see ! now the flowers began to nod and nod.

Greta smiled.

"Tra-la-lal-la !" sang Wanda at the top of her voice and came up like a whirlwind to her sister to show her a strange snail shell she had found on the beach.

Greta held up a warning hand.

"Hush ! Auntie is sleeping."

"Is she sleeping yet ?" cried Wanda so loudly that Auntie opened one eye. "I'm going to tell Mother !

"Auntie is sleeping and I'm terribly hungry !" said Wanda, whose mouth watered at the sight of all the goodies mamma had unpacked.

"Well, little 'bundle,' we'll soon eat."

"A-ah," said Wanda, looking longingly at a turnover which stuck up out of a bag.

"Here, little 'bundle,' carry these rolls over there and lay them on the table-cloth beside the butter-box. But, Wanda, don't step into the salt meat !" exclaimed Mother, shocked as Wanda, looking sideways at the turnover in the bag all the

while, did not see the salt meat, but set her foot right on a nice slice which lay topmost on the paper. At her mother's cry she leapt aside and dropped the rolls.

"Oh, little Careless !" scolded Mother.

"The turnovers — ," mumbled Wanda, picking up the rolls.

"What ? Oh, the turnovers. Well, they'll be divided among those who do something useful."

"Greta isn't doing anything; she's just sitting letting her legs tickle," muttered Wanda, looking with a sigh toward the turnovers which had disappeared in a basket.

"Don't you think Greta is doing something useful, even though she is sitting still ?"

Wanda did not look up; she pouted and felt naughty.

"Well, Wanda ?"

"She's only sitting letting her legs tickle," she repeated.

"Fie, Wanda ! Now you're not my good little girl," Mother said, reproachfully.

Wanda began to sob, threw her arms round her neck, and said that now she was good again, and asked if Mother were cross with her.

"No," answered Mrs. Borg, touched by her wretched air.

"Thank you," said Wanda and smiled through her tears, which dried quickly, and her sweet little face cleared up again.

After a few minutes, Wanda was beamingly happy. Nothing remained of her sorrow except a kindly feeling toward her mother and Greta, and a vague wish to do them a kindness in some way.

"You haven't eaten up all the goodies, have you ?" they heard a merry voice ask, and Mother and Wanda, who were crouched down busily unwrapping the deviled eggs, turned round. Aunt Annie, rosy and smiling was standing behind them, looking so rested and hungry that mother was much pleased.

"Good morning, Annie!" teased Mrs. Borg, and Wanda, who was now in her tenderest mood, came up and wanted a big hug and two kisses from Auntie.

Greta, who had waited to let her legs wake up and to pick the coveted blue flowers, now came limping toward them with her hat on her back and a little bouquet in her sash.

Aunt Annie and Mother had already taken their places beside the dinner table, which was a nice flat stone.

The lunch tastefully trimmed with crisp leaves arranged as a green wreath round each plate, looked very appetising. The cloth shone white against the grass, and the weeping birch beside the stone made the spot almost a bower. Yes, a better place one could not have chosen, and how good their dinner did taste eaten in the green grass.

The children had good appetites, and Greta had just finished her second sandwich when she noticed

that Wanda did not have any flowers as she had.

"Here, Wandis, dear," said she, giving her some of those she had in her sash.

"Thank you !" said Wanda softly, with a faint twinge of conscience. "Thank you, and you can have my swan, Murre."

Greta nodded her thanks, and Wanda, who was now very generous with her kisses, held up her buttery little mouth.

"This pickled eel is delicious," said Aunt Annie, looking at the bit she had on her fork.

"I like chicken better," remarked Greta, gnawing on a bone.

Wanda, who was very fond of eggs and had been promised three today, was sitting with her legs crossed and two eggs waiting in her lap. The third she was eating, and she begged the egg-yolk to be good enough to stay in the shell a while, and not run over her fingers; but the yolk ran and Wanda licked it off her fingers, and had yellow egg mustaches way up to her ears.

Wanda was covered with a large napkin so that she should not share too much of the yolk with her dress, and when she had finished her second egg, the napkin was very bright and colorful, and the dress also had a spot or two.

"Oh, Wandis, but you are funny !" said Greta. But Wanda paid no attention to her words, she was busy finding a good hiding place for the egg she could not eat, for she had been given it and of course had to keep it in her care. At last she decided to wrap it in moss and stuff it down under a juniper bush.

"Oh, if I only had two stomachs !" sighed Wanda, who had eaten sandwiches, eggs, pancakes with jam, chicken, wild strawberries with cream, and other things, and now when the turnovers appeared, she found to her sorrow that she had had enough.

Her wish caused much merriment, and when she heard this, she thought she had said something very clever, and repeated it.

"I almost agree with you," Aunt Annie chimed in.

Mother smiled and said that they should be careful about making such wishes because if the wind turned, the rooster crowed, and the clock struck just as they said it, it might happen that they would get their wish.

"Ugh !" shuddered Miss Wrete.

But Wanda thought that it would be great fun and she felt to see if she had received two stomachs.

"Mo-o-o-o !" suddenly came a sound nearby, and behind the juniper bushes they saw the friendly cow, which the children had thought so sweet.

Aunt Annie sprang up and dashed down to the boat.

"It isn't dangerous," Mother tried to calm Auntie. "She isn't at all angry, you can see that."

"How in the world did she get here ?" cried Aunt Annie, who still kept her distance. "Horrid cow ! Can she climb over fences too ?"

"But look ! look !" cried Greta. "The bossy is going to eat up Auntie's hat."

"Bossy ! Bossy ! leave Auntie's hat alone !" shrieked Wanda.

Mother broke off a stick and chased out the unbidden guest through a gate in the fence, and then barred the opening with a pole.

The hat had not suffered from the cow's deep admiration, but Auntie put it on her head for safe keeping.

After the meal was over, Mother and Auntie sat down under the weeping birches, and the children taking their little berry baskets, went to pick wild strawberries up on the hill. They had picked only enough to cover the bottom when Wanda caught sight of a ladybug creeping on a blade of grass. They both lay down flat on their stomachs, rested their elbows on the ground, and admired her.

"Soon she'll fly," said Greta.

"No, she can't fly," objected Wanda, beating her feet against the ground.

Just then Mother called to them, and they had to leave the pretty ladybug.

"We must be off," Mother said when they had come back to her. "It is getting cloudy and we may have a storm." And so the packing-up was done quickly, and they hurried down to the beach where *Snipan* lay, pulling impatiently on her cable.

"Uh, such clouds !" said Greta surprised.

"It's going to thunder," wailed Wanda, who was very much afraid of thunder.

"We'll get home before the storm," Aunt Annie calmed them, putting her arm protectingly round Wanda, who crept close to her.

"There are much bigger waves now," put in Greta, who sat looking out to sea.

Mrs. Borg rowed faster.

It grew silent on board *Snipan*. The clouds darkened and increased. The air felt heavy and

close at first. Afterward little whirlwinds came dancing over the surface of the water, ruffling it so that it reminded one of an angry cat with an arched back.

"O-o-o-oh ! how it rocks," said Greta, as they reached the middle of the bay. "Oh, Mother, I'm afraid !"

"You always used to be my brave little girl," answered Mother.

"We'll soon be home," said Auntie calmly. "Laura," she went on, staring toward Broby bridge, "I think I see them launching the big boat. They must be coming to meet us."

"Are they ? That's good," answered Mrs. Borg, who did not take time to turn her head. "Yes, Kristin probably thought of us and *Snipan* and grew anxious when she saw the clouds gathering."

"Is Johansson coming with big *Bore* ?" [1] asked Wanda, daring to look up.

[1] Bō'rĕ.

"Yes, Johansson and Lasse[1]," said Greta, who had keen eyes and recognized the men in the big boat. "The water is coming in !" she screamed and drew swiftly aside as a wave splashed up and washed over her arm.

"Greta ! For goodness' sake, sit still !" cried Mother.

Wanda began to cry.

A sizzling flash of lightning zigzagged across the sky, followed by a crash which echoed among the hills and made Wanda scream.

Greta folded her hands and tried to be brave and sit still when the water spattered up on her.

The rain began to pour down. Oh, if they were only at home !

Now again came a clap of thunder, and then a gust of wind that made *Snipan* actually groan.

Wanda, who was quite beside herself with terror, folded her hands and began to repeat her little prayer, "God, who loves little children."

[1] Làs'sĕ.

OH—OH, HOW THE BOAT DID JUMP!

Oh-oh, how the boat did jump !

But at last big *Bore* came with Johansson and Lasse, and after the children had been lifted over into the big boat and the women had managed to get aboard, *Snipan* was taken in tow, and Johansson with strong strokes, rowed toward Broby, where Kristin despite the downpour anxiously waited for them on the dock, and was most sincerely happy when she had them safely on land again.

Tony and King were of course also there to welcome them. Little King howled with joy and jumped way up into Wanda's face to greet her.

Greta took him in her arms and did not let him go until they were in the nursery.

After they had changed their clothes and were gathered in the living room, Kristin smilingly carried in a pot of coffee, declaring that a cup of hot coffee might not be amiss after such a "voyage." Kristin had to stay then, too, to have some coffee and hear the story of the excursion.

Now that it was all over, the children felt very

proud of having had such an adventure and talked about it for many days. Yes, so dauntless they had never felt before.

Wanda suddenly remembered the egg which she had hidden so well under the juniper bush. It was really very sad that she should have forgotten it, but Mother promised her another, and so she was satisfied.

The children each crept up on a chair at the window, with King between them, and amused themselves listening to the rain pattering on the windowpane and gushing out of the eaves-troughs, and also telling King again about the wonderful things that had happened that day.

CHAPTER VIII

WANDA'S FIRST ARTISTIC ATTEMPT

AUNT ANNIE'S painting materials had been sent from Stockholm, and she spent several hours every day on Outlook Hill, painting the beautiful view. The children would go up for her when bathing-time drew near, and delighted in watching her paint. It was especially interesting to watch Auntie press out the colors from the pretty little lead bottles she called tubes. Once they had been allowed to squeeze out some white paint and put it on the palette.

Greta hardly dared to press the paint tube, so afraid was she of breaking it, but Wanda, who was less timid, squeezed it with a force and a persistence that for all time robbed her of a chance to do it again.

"The paint came," was all she had said in answer to Auntie's reproaches. "And it wouldn't creep in again," she went on, and looked as if she thought it would be fun to mix the colors.

"May I help you paint ?" she had then offered kindly, and resolutely seized the brush, but Auntie had no wish to let her try, and, sighing, Wanda had to part with the brush.

She did not think it at all hard to paint; it looked so easy for Auntie ! She was sure it was fun. Wanda decided secretly to try out her talent at the first opportunity.

One day Aunt Annie had gone up to the hill quite early; Mother and the girls were coming for her about twelve o'clock. The children had dusted the playhouse, fed Gold and Silver Heart,

picked flowers for Mother, read their lessons, and were now ready, with towels in hand, to fetch Auntie.

"Go on ahead, little ones; I'll come later when I've made the sandwiches," answered Mother as they repeatedly asked her to hurry.

And so they set off. King gave them just one glance and hid away when he saw the towels.

Chattering, they went along the road, sometimes stopping to watch a large spider which was spinning his web between the fence pickets, sometimes to pick tempting wild strawberries, or listen to some sound. Now they found a glittering stone which must be saved, now a pretty leaf that would make a nice plume in a doll's hat, now something else which awakened their curiosity. Greta liked ferns and had found a stand of them in a crevice of the hill. Wanda did not care about ferns but wanted rather to go on up to Aunt Annie.

Greta stopped and dug with her fingers, not caring how grubby they looked, and Wanda climbed

up the steep path alone. Now and then an unripe whortleberry tempted her, but they were so sour that not even she could like them. She had tied the towel round her neck so that she would not have to carry it, and now she amused herself trying to find out how tightly she could pull it without strangling herself. Wanda played these strange games sometimes.

After she had tired of trying to strangle herself, she found some small toadstools and began examining them. She turned round a few times to look for Greta, but as she was not in sight, went on her way. When she reached the top of the hill, Aunt Annie was not there. The easel with the picture stood in its usual place; the stool, the box of brushes and the palette were also there, but Auntie was missing. Wanda looked round for her. No, she was not there.

Then Wanda stepped forward to the picture and stood inspecting it, with her hands behind her back. Her face cleared, her mouth smiled, and

her eyes began to shine. Now she could paint !

She took another step toward the picture, bent down for the brush and palette, tried to hold them as she had seen Auntie hold them, dipped the brush in a cornflower blue mass of paint, tipped her head sideways, and improved the sky with a generous daub.

It wasn't as pretty as she had expected. She tried another daub, but this time she chose a grass-green paint which took her eye. Oh, well, it could be worse, thought Wanda, looking at the work of her hands.

Suppose she tried something else besides the sky ? That was not fun any more. Then she decided to make another red cottage beside Auntie's on the grayish-yellow hill. She dipped her blue-green brush in the bright red paint, and made a spot with a line upward, which was meant to be a cottage and chimney beside Auntie's cottage. Strangely enough, part of the cottage became red, part green-red-blue ! The cottage was

pretty anyway she thought, and put in two black dots for windows.

She laughed. She thought the cottage looked like a cat with one ear and two round eyes.

It was not really so hard to paint. Just think how Auntie would marvel !

No, but the sky was *not* good ! It must be made better. And so she drew her brush over it. Alas, now it was red, blue, green and lavender ! She threw down the brush and palette and fled, for her conscience told her that this Auntie surely would not like.

She hid far down on the hill behind some bushes preparing to scare Greta, who had not appeared.

After waiting for a while, Greta came and with her was Mother. Wanda prepared to rush out, but a sly hawthorn branch caught her dress, and tore a big hole.

"Well, Wanda, so this is where you are," said Mother, adding that the branch did right in holding her fast when she wanted to scare people.

"It tore," lamented Wanda, boring her finger into the hole.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear," said mamma, but as Wanda seldom tore her clothes she was spared a scolding.

"Hello !" came Aunt Annie's voice, as her head bobbed up behind some bushes. "Hello ! Do you know, Laura, I've found the nicest bathing beach near here, to the right of the hill, the finest sandy bottom, and shallow," she added, as she reached them. "It would be much more fun to bathe in the open sea, where it is warm and pleasant, and there is no one there to see us."

Mrs. Borg had no objection, and the children of course were delighted. It would be much more fun to bathe in the open sea than in the bathhouse.

"We can look at my picture later and go in bathing at once," proposed Aunt Annie.

And they turned down to the new bathing beach.

Wanda loitered behind the rest. The changes of color in Aunt Annie's sky worried her a little.

"Well, Wandis, why are you so quiet ?" asked Auntie, turning toward her, but Wanda drew away and ran over beside Greta.

"So the little 'bundle' got up on the wrong side of the bed this morning." Auntie took her sister's arm, and singing softly, began to lead them to the new bathing beach.

"The nicest sand bottom !" she cried, showing them the smooth light sand, which sparkled in the sunshine and looked so inviting through the clear water.

"Yes, indeed," agreed Mrs. Borg.

And then they began to undress. Greta was the first to be ready and she ran laughing out into the shallow water. It was such fun, she thought, to wriggle her feet down into the soft, fine sand and to be able to go so far out without its being at all cold or dangerous.

Wanda sat on a stone, kicking in the water.

"Look, Mother, Auntie," called Greta, holding herself up with her hands on the sandy bottom and

kicking with her legs. "I can swim !" and she felt very proud of herself.

Now she felt so brave that she also wanted to try to duck. She closed her eyes, cried, "good-bye ! good-bye !" and dipped her head down into the water. Oh, what a funny feeling !

Spluttering and gasping she came up, looking like a drowned cat, Auntie said.

Of course, Mother thought she was extremely brave, and Wanda, who really felt worried when she thought of what was going to happen on the hill later on, decided not to let Greta be brave alone. She squeezed her eyes together, cried, "good-bye ! good-bye !" and cautiously dipped her little nose into the water. She held it bravely under the water a while, and when she took it out and saw how the water dripped from it she thought she had done something wonderful, and when Father came home a few days later, Wanda told him proudly, that she had learned to duck and it wasn't at all hard.

Greta was bent on exploration and found a spot with a clay bottom.

She stuck her foot down into it, and it turned a grayish color. Then she wanted to color her whole body, which she did, and then went to show herself to Mother and Auntie who were swimming about.

After she had been admired as a "clay cuckoo," so Auntie, with a side-glance at Wanda, called her, and walked about, her body began to sting. She rubbed and washed to get the clay off, but it was not easy to get rid of. It pricked and burned so that she began to whimper.

"Yes, that's what happens when one takes a mud-bath," said Auntie, tenderly. "Poor little one."

Greta's body was full of red spots which smarted and pricked more and more. Mrs. Borg became worried but Auntie reassured her, saying that it could not be dangerous to smear oneself with clay.

When they were dressed, Greta wanted to go

home and Wanda asked to go with her. She had no wish to go up on the hill.

Promising to be with them soon, Mrs. Borg climbed the hill to see the picture.

"I have nearly finished it," said Miss Wrete, happily as they went up the trail. "Tomorrow I'll be able to finish it."

As they reached the top, Miss Wrete stopped short a few yards from the easel and stared.

"What !" she cried and looked dazed.

"Laura ! See ! What does this mean ?" and she looked in astonishment at Wanda's masterpiece.

Mrs. Borg also stared speechlessly at the colorful sky and this reddish spot which was meant to be a cottage. She stood dumb with wonder; then their eyes met, and they sank weakly down on a stone in front of the work of art, and for a long time no other sound was heard but their hearty laughter.

"You've certainly prepared a surprise for me.

I didn't think you could paint so beautifully as that !" teased Mrs. Borg.

"I really ought to be angry," said Miss Wrete.

"But this is too absurd. Who could have done it ?"

"I don't know. Do you know any one who could be accused of such great artistic talent ?" asked Mrs. Borg, trying to look serious.

"No. Perhaps a forest troll has been here," suggested Miss Wrete, looking so gentle that it would have been a healing balm to poor Wanda's anxious heart if she could have seen her.

Wanda walked home thinking of whippings and dark closets and all sorts of unpleasant things, while Greta moaned because her whole body pricked and burned like fire.

When they reached home, Kristin undressed Greta, who could not bear to have her clothes touch the little blisters which covered her body. She walked about the nursery wrapped in a soft

blanket, after Kristin had bathed her with an antiseptic which soothed the pain.

In that way, Greta had to spend her day, and not until dinner time the next day could she dress herself properly and go out.

As for Wanda, she had disappeared. No one had seen her since the children had come home together. For a whole hour there was a searching and a calling for Wanda. But no Wanda came! Dinner was on the table; still Wanda had not been found.

The whole household was worried.

Miss Wrete chanced to go up into the big attic to hunt for her. She called. No answer. She was about to turn round when she thought she heard a sob. She listened; another sob. She looked about but saw no one, listened again, and went in the direction from which the sound came. There she found the lost Wanda, crouched down between two big chests.

"Auntie, Auntie, I only wanted to help you. Don't be angry because the sky didn't get as pretty as the cottage !" she cried, beside herself with fear, as Miss Wrete drew her forth.

"What ?" asked Miss Annie, surprised, as she suddenly understood what Wanda was talking about. "Oh, so it was you, little 'bundle', who painted my picture ! You really needn't have done that." But she did not look at all angry.

Wanda looked at her wonderingly.

"I was so afraid," she sobbed.

"Little goose ! Is that why you hid like this and nearly frightened Mother and me to death ?"

"Ye-es. Aren't you angry, Auntie ?"

"No, not at all. I understand that you just wanted to help me," she answered, as her lips twitched at the memory of the work of art. "When I was little, I did exactly the same thing as you did," she said. "I had to go without my dinner that day and had to sit alone in a dark room to think it over, and as I remember how unpleasant

that was, you will be spared it. So there little 'bundle,' come now; I'm not angry. Give Auntie a kiss and everything is all right. But remember that in the future you are not to paint on my pictures nor on anyone's else."

"Yes, Auntie," promised Wanda, who now felt at peace, and let Auntie lead her downstairs where she was received with exclamations and questions.

Auntie told Mother what had happened and said that this time Wanda's fright was punishment enough, to which Mother agreed, happy to have her little tomboy with her again.

The next day Auntie repaired the remarkable picture, and now it hangs in a wide gilt frame in the Broby drawing room and is so beautiful that every one admires it, and no one suspects that on it Wanda made her first attempt at painting.

CHAPTER IX

THE FAIRIES AND THE BLACK CAT

It was quiet in the nursery. The shades were down; the sisters had wished each other good night and Wanda was sleeping.

Greta twisted and turned. She could not sleep. During the morning she had met Lisen, the fisherman's daughter, who promised that as soon as it was dark in the evening and the moon had risen, she would meet her down on the road. Then together they would go to Sea Cape, and Greta would see the fairies dancing.

She had asked permission, but Mother had said that of course she could not be up so late. She must go to bed at nine o'clock as usual.

Greta begged and pleaded, but in vain.

Broby began to be quiet. She had heard her mother go into her room and go to bed. Now she, no doubt, was asleep.

She waited still a while, but as the silence continued she crept out of bed, drew on her stockings, pattered over to the window, and parted the curtains.

There lay all of Broby, drenched in moonlight. Greta pulled up the shade. Then she went back to the chair on which her clothes lay.

She hastily put on a skirt and a thick shawl, thrust her feet into her shoes, and stole on tiptoe over to the window, which she silently opened. She listened, but heard nothing; every one seemed to be asleep. Wanda breathed softly in her bed, King rose and pattered after her to the window, wagging his tail.

Greta crept up on the chair and then into the window. She measured the distance to the ground with her eye; it wasn't at all far; then she slid down.

Now she was standing outside, quite alone in the moonlight. She felt suddenly that all of Broby looked mysterious, cold, and different. She wrapt the shawl closer about her and stole forward. The sand crunched so strangely under her feet. It did not sound at all pleasant; it had never sounded like that before.

Something was pattering behind her; she started and felt a sudden desire to scream before she saw that it was old Tony; old Tony, who guarded house and home while they all slept.

Tony wagged his tail and looked wonderingly at her, as if to say, "What are you doing here, Greta ? Does Mother know that you are out alone at this time of night when you should be sleeping ?" But Greta did not understand what Tony was trying to say, and Tony, who was watching Greta with

suspicious eyes, followed to guard her in whatever she was going to do.

"Go, Tony !" she said, raising her hand.

Sighing, Tony turned round. He was used to obeying, but he followed Greta with his eyes until she disappeared down the road.

It was strange that Lisen was not there !

Greta stole along the road feeling very queer. Every little rustle made her heart beat. No, Lisen was not there.

Dared she go all the way down to Sea Cape where the fairy stone lay ? Perhaps Lisen was there. Yes, she probably was. Oh, how dark the shadows were there beside the bushes ! Dared she go by them ? But Lisen was on the other side, she had to get there, and so she crept tremblingly by. But no Lisen was to be seen.

"Lisen !" she called, and jumped with fright when the echo answered, "Lisen."

The cry sounded so weird at night.

A rustle in the bushes made her start; she was

beside herself with terror and rushed toward the fairy stone. She felt stiff with horror! There in the blackness under the stone arch sat a terrible black creature with eyes which shone through the darkness like living coals.

Greta gave a shriek which cut through the silence of the night, turned round half-dead with fright, and fled toward Broby.

There was a rustling, a pattering, a sighing behind her; something was following her, she was certain; something was about to take hold of her; oh, it came nearer and nearer. Panting, she ran up the road, stumbling and tripping on stones and roots, but she must get away, fast, fast!

A round stone lay in her way, she tripped over it and fell with a cry to the ground, and in falling bumped her knee against a sharp stone which cut her badly.

She sprang up again, fear deadening the smarting pain in her knee. At last she reached the yard.

GRETA FLED TOWARD BROBY

She rushed up to the window to jump in, but that was more than she was able to do. She could not reach it because there was no chair to climb on as there was in the nursery. How was she to get in ?

And every one was sleeping !

Locked out, trembling with fear and with an aching knee, alone in the night ! Poor Greta, she had plenty of time to regret what she had done.

Tony came out and licked her hand.

"Tony ! Dear old Tony !" Now he was not sent away; he had seldom been so welcome before. Greta threw her arms round his neck and hid her face in the long-haired coat.

"Mother, Mother," she sobbed. Oh yes, Mother would help her Greta. Why hadn't she thought of that before ! Weeping she hurried to her bedroom window, knocked on the pane, and called, "Mother !"

This cry woke her mother.

"Mother !" it came again.

Mrs. Borg sprang up and ran into the children's room. There, the window was open, the moonlight came in brightly and shone on Greta's empty bed.

"Greta !" called Mrs. Borg, frightened. "Greta !"

"Yes, Mother, yes," answered a trembling voice; the sand crunched, and soon afterwards Greta's tear-drenched face appeared at the window.

"Mother, I'm dying," she wailed. "Take me in !"

And after her mother had lifted her in, crying and still frightened, she told her all that had happened.

"They were coming after me, oh, they were coming after me," she cried shivering and hiding her face in her mother's lap.

"No, Greta, they were not coming after you," answered her mother. "It was your conscience that said you had done wrong when you were dis-

obedient, and that's why you were afraid. Your conscience has punished you."

"But the black thing, the black thing," murmured Greta.

"That was the fisherman's black cat, of course," her mother answered. She undressed Greta and put a cold compress on her hurt knee, which was aching badly.

"My head too," she wailed.

"My poor child, you have a fever," said Mother, putting a wet cloth on her hot forehead. "I'll sit with you until you go to sleep."

"May I sleep in your bed, Mother, I'm so afraid," whispered Greta.

Mother carried her into her room, and she was soon asleep with her mother's hand fast in her own. But even in her dreams she seemed to be running away from the black cat under the stone arch.

Greta felt better when dawn came, but she had to stay in several days until her knee healed, and

she could not even be at the dock to meet Father when he came home.

FATHER brought a surprise, or rather two, when he came home from Stockholm. Greta, who was sitting at the nursery window when the boat docked, opened her eyes wide when she saw that besides Father, a boy and girl came ashore, and both were hugged and kissed by Mother and Aunt Annie.

Greta pressed her nose against the pane, in order to see better, but still she did not recognize them. She did not know them, of that she was sure.

Now Father must have asked about her because he looked about him in surprise as if searching for something, and said a few words to Mother, who answered, making a movement with her head toward the house.

They walked up the hill, all talking and looking very happy. Such fun, to have Father home with them again !

Wanda clung fast to Auntie and seemed to be shy with the two strange children. She thrust her head into Auntie's dress when they talked to her, only looking at them by stealth; but if by chance her spying glances met theirs, she closed her eyes and hid her face again.

Greta waved to them as they came up the hill, and Father swung his hat in greeting.

"Father, welcome, Father !" she called to him, opening the window. "Are you coming to see me ?"

"Yes, at once, my little Greta."

When her father came in, he sat down in the big chair and lifted her up on his knee, she leaned her head against him, and had so very much to tell about all that had happened while he was away that she forgot to ask who the strange children were.

"So Murre amuses herself by crawling out through the window in the middle of the night and running down to the sea without asking permission to visit the black cat, and getting a hole in her

knee," said Father, when she told him about her visit to Sea Cape.

"Yes, Murre was such a dunce," she answered.

"Well, little one, how is your knee now ?"

"Thank you, it is much better. Mother thinks I can go out pretty soon."

"But not through the window any more," said Father, raising his finger.

"No, never," answered Greta, shaking her head.

"Didn't you see that I had playmates with me for you ?" asked Father at last.

"Yes; who are they ?" she asked curiously.

"They are Cousin Nils and Cousin Jenny, Aunt Matilda's children. But you have never seen either Aunt Matilda or your cousins before, because they live way down in southern Sweden, near Ronneby."

"Yes, I remember Mother talking about them."

Father nodded.

"And since they were on a visit at Grandmother's

in Stockholm, I borrowed them for you for a few days," he added. "Let me see now that my big girl is polite and kind to her cousins," and kissing her on the forehead, he lifted her carefully back on the chair so that he should not hurt her knee.

When he rose to go, Greta caught his hand and held him back.

"I don't like Nils," she said. "He is much bigger than I am."

"What a reason, my little Murre! I don't want to hear anything like that," he added seriously. "You should like all good people."

"He's probably not good," she said, but she said it so softly that Father did not hear her.

After breakfast the cousins came in to see Greta.

"So you are Greta. Good day!" said Nils, after a moment's silent examination.

"Good day!" she answered and shyly held out her hand. Nils did not look at all wicked at close range.

"How old are you?" continued Nils.

"I'll be eight years old in a few days. How old are you ?"

"Oh, I am ten years old already," answered Nils proudly.

Little Jenny, who was just Wanda's age, had already made friends with her, and now ran up to Greta and held up her mouth for a kiss.

"Poor Greta, who has hurt her knee," said she with a wondering look at Greta's bandaged knee.

"Oh, I'll soon be well," answered Greta, "and then we'll all go round and see everything. Are you going to stay long ?"

"I don't know," said Nils.

"Yes, of course you are; really awfully long," put in Wanda who already loved Jenny. "You're going to stay, and we'll have such fun. Tral-la-la !" she sang, whirling round with Jenny.

King, who thought this a jolly dance, sprang up and snapped at their dresses, yelping the while, and when he managed to fasten his teeth in Wanda's

skirts, he bit and pulled, and was dragged along, growling, as they whirled about. Then there was laughter and merriment in the nursery. All shyness was blown away and the children felt that they had known each other always.

"If you have a cart, Greta, I'll be glad to pull you in it, now that you can't walk," suggested Nils.

Yes, there was an old wagon somewhere. They would ask Mother about it, and then they could all be together.

The wagon was found and taken out. Greta was placed in it, and then the little group set off to admire the garden. But Nils thought that their own garden down in Blekinge was prettier.

Wanda showed them the playhouse while Greta waited outside in the cart. They made a short excursion up the woods-road too, and even the chicken-coop was honored by a visit. The hens were greatly astonished when they saw the carriage stopping outside. It was the first time Greta had

come in such state; and the hens stretched their necks in order to see the spectacle properly. Polle cried his prettiest "cock-a-doodle-doo," and Golden Heart stepped forward politely to meet them.

CHAPTER X

A BIRTHDAY AND A BIG SURPRISE

It was Greta's birthday. The sun shone through the window right into the eyes of the birthday-child, as if to congratulate her. Greta lay looking round, listening, and closing her eyes whenever anyone came in.

Wanda's bed was empty. She had crept out a good while ago, stolen over to Greta and asked, "Are you asleep, Greta ?" But she had no answer, because Greta knew she should be asleep

when Wanda got up before her on her birthday. Then Wanda had pattered in to Mother's room to be dressed, and had not been seen since.

Oh, if Mother would only come soon and wake Greta, as she always did on her birthday.

She heard the sound of voices and steps and the slamming of doors. Wouldn't she ever be allowed to get up today ?

Now there were steps outside the door ! Now Mother was coming !

No, the steps went by. How tiresome !

Just think, today she would be eight years old. Next time she would be nine, nine years old. Then she would be almost big.

Now Mother was here ! Greta sat up in bed and held out her arms to her.

"Mother dearest, good morning !"

Then Mother kissed her, wished her a happy birthday, and said that since she was eight years old, now she must be more sensible. Then she gave Greta a pretty new cotton dress which she was

to wear the following Sunday when they went to church.

Greta sat up in bed, feeling happy and content, thinking that the whole world was beautiful and perfect. It felt exactly as if it were a holiday.

"How I love Mother and everybody !" she cried, and pressed kiss after kiss on her mother's cheek.

She dressed very quickly that day.

When she was dressed and opened the door into the living room, she stopped on the threshold.

There stood the little peasant girl in the red bodice, and two other girls.

One wore a thin dainty dress and had a basket of flowers on her arm, and a hat covered with flowers and grass. The other girl, who was taller, had a shawl on her head, an old checked shawl tied cross-wise on her back, a striped skirt, and an accordion which she was trying to play, although it did not sound very pretty. When Greta stepped into the room, the three began to dance and jump in time to the music of the accordion which really

was a trial to one's ears. That tallest girl looked, somehow, a great deal like Nils.

After they had danced a while, they came toward Greta. The peasant girl kissed her, held out a dust-cloth which she herself had hemmed and which was intended for *Golden Star Castle*, and wished her a good birthday.

That dust-cloth had no doubt cost the peasant girl many tears. It was her first attempt, and one saw here and there little red specks which told tales about how the needle had pricked her fingers. But then that dust-cloth, at the repeated questions of the little girl, was greatly admired and examined.

The flower girl gave her flowers, and the girl in the shawl kept on entertaining them with her music.

When Father came in, he lifted Greta high into the air, gave her a dear little iron for her doll's washing, and a bag of candy which she was to share with the rest. Aunt Annie congratulated her and

said that she also had a present for her but that she would have to hunt for it herself. It was something that was black and shone, if one kept it in order; it was both cold and hot, and when it was hot it had to be fed.

Greta was so curious she could hardly eat.

What could it be that was both hot and cold, and that must be fed when it was warm ?

The other children, who seemed to be in the secret, had a great deal of fun with Greta, who sat wondering so hard that she could hardly find her mouth.

"It burns sometimes too," enlightened the peasant girl, who found it hard not to tell the secret.

"It has many rings," said Father.

"And it smokes," declared the flower girl.

"Well, Greta, can't you guess when you've had so much help ?" asked Mother.

But Greta could not.

"May I hunt now ?" she asked Auntie, when they had risen from the table.

"No, I've changed my mind," said Aunt Annie. "I'll lead you there myself, but you must be blindfolded a while, and remember not to look until I say so !"

Greta promised to keep her eyes closed, and after she had had a scarf tied round her eyes, Auntie took her hand, the tall girl played the accordion, and they marched off. Even Mother went along to see the surprise.

"It must be far away," thought Greta, who felt that they would never get there. They must be in the garden because she could feel that they had walked over both gravel and grass.

"Halt !" commanded Auntie.

Greta drew a sigh of satisfaction.

Auntie left her alone a moment and then came back.

"Step up two steps," came the order. "And then take off the bandage."

That she was in the playhouse she saw at once,

but she noticed nothing unusual. She turned round.

"Oh !" she shrieked and rushed forward, stopped, looked at Auntie, and rushed forward again.

In one corner of the playhouse stood a real, little stove, with a stove-pipe, doors, pans, lids, kettles, and hooks.

Greta threw herself down before it, dumb with joy. Then she sprang up and hugged her Aunt. Yes, Mother too received a hug, and then back to the stove ran Greta,

"I thought you'd like it, Murre dear."

"Oh, Auntie !" she cried, her happiness choking her.

"Now you have a kitchen too in *Golden Star Castle*," said Mother, admiring the stove.

"Well, Greta, are you going to treat us to something good ?" asked Nils.

"Dear me, yes ! You can all have whatever

you want cooked," she promised lavishly, seizing a saucepan.

"This is going to be fun," Nils exclaimed, sitting down beside her to watch the preparations.

What a darling little stove! The fire burned and crackled exactly as though it were a real, big, iron stove. The stove-pipe went out through the wall of the playhouse, the dripping pan stood in the oven, a saucepan full of water was boiling on top, and a dear little pancake griddle was enthroned beside a small stewpan.

Beside the stove there was a shelf with saucers, plates, and cups. The coffee pot and a pair of small molds stood beside a little white bowl. It was a complete kitchen outfit.

"Oh, Father, come and see what Auntie gave me!" called Greta radiantly, dancing to meet him with a ladle in one hand and a pothook in the other.

"Yes, Auntie is spoiling you entirely, little Murre."

"Yes," said Greta, exulting as she saw the water boiling in the saucepan.

"Now I suppose there will be so much cooking out here that you'll burn up all the wood at Broby," said Father.

"I'll be glad to chop wood and carry it in," promised Nils.

But Mother explained that Nils must not touch an axe as long as he was at Broby. If he wanted to carry in wood for the little stove, the girls would of course be thankful for his help.

Wanda thought the girls could carry wood themselves. She supposed it would be a real pleasure, but Aunt Annie thought that the girls would have other things to do in the new kitchen, and that therefore Nils should carry wood.

"Oh, Greta, can you make pancakes ?" asked Wanda, who was playing with the nice little pancake griddle.

"Of course I can," asserted Greta, putting the

griddle on the stove because she knew at least that it had to stand over the fire.

"What are you going to do now ?" wondered Wanda, who was following all her movements with great curiosity.

"May I help you ?" asked Jenny, kneeling beside Greta.

"Yes, maybe," answered Greta, looking about hesitantly.

"Well, Murre, how are the pancakes coming ?" asked Mother, seeing Greta's helpless look. "Perhaps you need a little help ?"

"Yes, I don't really know what to do," she admitted. "Shouldn't there be milk for pancakes ?"

"Yes, indeed. Run in to Kristin and she'll give you everything you need."

Greta ran off.

"I'll go too, to help carry," said Wanda.

"I too, I too," cried Jenny and Nils, and then all four ran off.

A little later they came back.

Greta was carrying the pancake batter in a bowl, Wanda, a cup of butter, Jenny, a feather to grease the pan, and Nils, the knife with which to turn the pancakes.

The griddle was hot now, and the children gathered round the stove. Jenny greased the griddle, Greta poured the batter in the spoon, Wanda held the knife ready even before the batter had stiffened. Nils looked on.

"No, Wanda, wait a little," warned Mrs. Borg, as Wanda stuck the knife into the pancake batter.

"It takes so long," she sighed, licking off the knife.

"Usch, you little pig," exclaimed Aunt Annie, who had seen Wanda's behavior with the knife. "Who will want to eat pancakes which have been turned with the knife you have licked ? See here, wash it off in this warm water !"

Wanda obeyed.

"The batter was good," she announced.

"Tell us how Kristin made the batter," said Mother as they were waiting for the pancakes to fry.

"Well, she beat the egg and the milk, and then she put in flour, and then she beat it again, and then she put in salt, and then it was ready. Yes, and then I got butter to grease the pan."

"Next time I can make the batter myself," said Greta.

"Yes, we can," affirmed Wanda, who had now scratched several pancakes to pieces in trying to turn them. Mother had to show her how to do it, but Wanda always broke them in three pieces, and never managed to keep them whole.

"Couldn't we cook coffee at the same time ?" wondered Greta.

"Dear me, yes ! If you'll look in the cupboard you'll find a little coffee jar. I think there is a bowl of sugar too."

Yes, it was all there.

"Shall I beat the water and coffee, as Kristin did the milk and the egg ?"

"No, Murre dear. Put the coffee in the pot, one teaspoonful for each cup, and then pour in the water. That's right. Then put the coffee pot over the fire."

Now the coffee pot, too, stood on the stove.

"The pancakes, Wanda, the pancakes !" cried Aunt Annie, for Wanda, busy watching Greta's coffee pot, had neglected her pancakes till they were now dark brown and burned.

"I'll take the knife and turn them myself," said Greta, and took it over with an important air. "You can watch the coffee, Wandis."

The pancake turning did not go much better for Greta than it did for Wanda. At least half a dozen were either lumps or torn to pieces. But gradually it grew better.

At last seven pancakes lay on a saucer, certainly not quite whole and nice, but tasting good anyway.

Mother and Auntie had to go in to attend to something, and the children declared that they could take care of themselves so that they need not stay to help them.

"I'll be in the pantry, if you do need me," Mother said as she left them.

"I know what to do," announced Wanda, giving the coffee pot a friendly glance. Her eyes were wide open, her hair was falling over her forehead, her cheeks glowed, her mouth was open, and I don't know where her nose had been but it certainly had a spot of soot on its round little tip. That Wanda devoted herself with all her heart and soul to kitchen duties was plain to be seen.

When the children were alone, there began a chattering, a frying, and a busy-ness in *Golden Star Castle* the like of which has seldom been seen.

Nils suggested that they try out all the saucepans and kettles. They all agreed, and Greta offered to go in to Kristin for something to cook.

While Greta was in the pantry with Mother getting provisions, Wanda came running in to ask pantingly if coffee had to boil over more than three times, or if it were done now.

Mrs. Borg promised to come soon and help them set things right, and advised Wanda that while they were waiting, she might put another stovelid under the coffee pot so that it would not boil too hard.

Mother and Greta came back with the basket and of course it had to be examined.

In it they found several small slices of veal which would be good cutlets, a jar of jam, and a bit of dough in a cup.

"What are we going to do with this ?" wondered Greta after they had drunk the coffee which had a strange salty taste. Wanda had an idea that there must be salt in all food and when Greta had run in to her mother, meddlesome Wanda had put a whole handful into the coffee pot.

"Why, we're going to fry veal cutlets," said

Mrs. Borg. "Break the egg and beat it with a little cream. Is that done ?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Dip the slices of meat first in the egg and then in these dry crumbs."

"The frying pan is warm now," said Wanda, who had tested it with her finger and burned herself a little.

"It must be hotter. Salt the cutlets a little. Jenny, can you put a little butter in the pan ? And now, in with the cutlets ! Turn them when they are brown."

"What are we going to make with the jam ?" asked Nils.

"Something very good, a dessert," answered Mrs. Borg.

Greta rolled out the dough which was in the cup, cut it round a plate, put it in the cake-tin and spread jam over it. The tin was pushed into the oven, and Mother stayed with them until the meal

was ready, and when Aunt Annie came to call, she, too, was invited to dinner.

The guests thought the dinner excellent, and Aunt Annie, who especially liked the cake, asked Greta to teach her to make it so she could have something very good for Grandmother when she returned to Stockholm.

CHAPTER XI

TANT SOFIE MAKES A VISIT

In spite of the summer heat, and the many burns which acquaintance with the little stove occasioned, the children still played daily in the new kitchen at *Golden Star Castle.*

Once Auntie had helped them make butterscotch. The first batch was scorched, but Wanda, who thought it was too bad to throw away so much syrup and almonds, asked if she might have it for herself, whereupon she poured it out on a piece of paper and let it cool. Afterwards, both she and

the butter-scotch disappeared, and when she finally came back, she was dark brown way up to her ears, and complained of pains in her stomach. She had fled to the attic so as not to be disturbed and crouched down between two big chests, she had devoured the butter-scotch all alone.

Wanda now had to take some horrid medicine and could not take part in the real candy party. But Mother kept some of the newly made butter-scotch till another day when she was well.

A few days later, as the children were playing tag on the lawn, and shrieking like steamboat whistles, Tant [1] Sofie Nyman drove up in a pony cart. The happy cries grew more subdued, and gradually the game stopped.

Greta and Wanda were very much afraid of Tant Sofie. She had wicked eyes, the children said, although Mother had forbidden them to think so. But that did not make any difference, they still thought so.

[1] Tant is used as American children use "aunt" for older friends who are not blood-relations.

Greta had once been scolded unjustly by Tant Sofie. She and Sven, Tant's son, were playing together at Bergslunda, where Tant Sofie lived. Sven took down a vase to show Greta and somehow the vase fell on the floor. Sven cried and said that Greta had broken it, and Greta, who had not even touched it, was so frightened when Tant came in and scolded her that she could do nothing but weep. When she came home she told all about it, and Mother tried to comfort her, saying that Tant Sofie could not have thought anything else but that she had broken the vase when Sven said so. Yes, Greta thought Sven was bad boy who told lies, but she also thought that Tant Sofie should have *known* that she had not broken the vase. She could never forgive her for that.

As Tant Sofie's pony cart drove into the grounds, the children disappeared into the playhouse and closed the door.

Within, a conference was held. Greta and Wanda told the story about the vase. Jenny

and Nils were burning with indignation, and Nils demanded revenge.

"No, that is bad," said Greta doubtfully.

But Nils had an idea he wanted to carry out.

Much talking followed, now and then a laugh was heard too, and at last the door opened, and they stole out with their hats on. Nils was carrying the accordion under his arm, and they turned their steps toward the big highway which leads to Bergslunda.

About fifteen minutes' walk from Broby the meadow was cut by a little brook, swift and full of water in the spring, but now almost dry in the heat of summer. A wide bridge with railings crossed the brook, and many big stones lay scattered under the arch of the bridge where, if one were a little boy or girl, one could stand almost erect.

When Tant Sofie, who was driving herself, had left Broby behind her and reached the bridge, her thoughts were disturbed by a furious howl, mixed with the false notes of an accordion which seemed

to come from under the bridge. Alarmed, she jerked the reins and tried to hold the horse back, but he had become frightened and bolted.

If the horse had not been in such a hurry to be off, I think the screams under the bridge would have been of another order, because Tant Sofie had the whip in her hand, and it is not likely that she would have been sparing of a few well-deserved cuts. But the horse had no wish to wait, and Tant Sofie is still ignorant of who the culprits were.

"He's running away! He's running away!" screamed Nils who could not help sticking his head out. "Oh, my! but he's running!" And Nils and the other three children, who now had crept out, stood staring after the horse and Tant Sofie in amazement.

"Poor Tant Sofie!" exclaimed Greta, whose grudge had now disappeared. "Just think if she is killed, like Uncle Tunholm's coachman!" And then she told her cousins how Uncle Tunholm's

THE HORSE HAD BECOME FRIGHTENED, AND BOLTED

coachman had been killed. When the horses ran away, he had been caught in the reins and dragged along the ground so long that he died.

"Such a foolish horse !" said Wanda, who felt it convenient to blame Tant's horse, because he let himself be frightened by their noise.

"Mother will be very angry," said Greta, still looking in the direction in which the horse and carriage had disappeared into the woods.

"We won't tell anybody," suggested Nils, who also thought that the news of what had happened would not be well received. "We just need to keep still !"

Greta looked at him.

"No !" said she. "We'll tell Mother everything."

Nils declared that Greta was a tattle-tale, but Greta said that when she told on herself, she was not.

Wanda and Jenny trudged along hand in hand toward home.

It was with lingering, reluctant steps that they neared Broby.

In the lane they met Aunt Annie.

"Where have you been, little ones ?" she asked pleasantly.

"Away," said Nils, taking on a bold look.

"Really ! You seem to be a real slyboots, Nils," said Aunt Annie. "One does not answer like that when one is asked a question."

"We have been . . . we have been . . ." answered Greta, and began to cry.

Aunt Annie in wonder, took them with her to an arbor, and there Greta remorsefully, confessed everything.

Auntie must have been very angry when she heard what happened, because she hid her face in her hands and sat perfectly quiet for a long time, and when Greta at last asked anxiously if she were very angry, she looked up, and answered, "Oh, yes." Her face was very red, she bit her lips together, and she had tears in her eyes. Aunt

Annie promised to talk to Mother later, but Greta, herself, ran and told her what had happened. She could have no peace until Mother knew about it.

Mrs. Borg was very unhappy about it and intended to send a messenger to Bergslunda to find out if anything serious had happened to Tant Sofie; but luckily it was not necessary because a little later Johansson returned from an errand and said that he had met her near Bergslunda and that her horse looked humble enough and was walking quietly. All were pleased at this news, and Mother said that if anything had happened to Tant Sofie, all the children would have been locked in their rooms for the whole day; but now they need suffer only a few hours imprisonment.

For several days Nils had been up to one prank after another and Aunt Annie declared that he had become too unruly. Once he crept under the horses, so that they could have trampled him if they had not been so gentle and good; then he tried to walk on a plank out in the barnyard pond and

almost fell in, but escaped wet to his knees. Another day he wanted to draw up the water out of the barnyard well; if Johansson had not been at hand to catch Nils by the arm, he would have fallen to the bottom of the well.

During his visits to the stable and the barn, Nils had discovered that the hayloft was a fine place to play. It was so easy to turn somersaults there, and one could hide so well, if one crept under the hay.

One Sunday, when they returned from church, Nils confided to the girls in a whisper that he had found a new place to play. They must go there and have some fun. Nils had seen Kalle, one of the village boys, turn cartwheels, and now he had no peace until he too had learned to roll along like a wheel.

First the children went to the village and invited Kalle and his sister to come up to the hayloft where Kalle was to teach Nils how to turn cartwheels.

Kalle grinned cheerfully and was about to patter along barefoot, just as he was. But Nils thought that they should be dressed up if they were to play at Broby Farm, and told Kalle to put on his shoes. Kalle obeyed and Stina followed his example. Then they all went to the hayloft and Kalle began to turn cartwheels while the girls jumped in the hay.

They had played there about half an hour when a shrill cry caused Mrs. Borg to leap up and dash out of the house. She thought that the children were in the playhouse where she had left them, but instead she saw them coming from the stables.

With the blood streaming from her forehead and completely covering one eye, Jenny rushed screeching up to her.

Greta and Wanda, who were also screaming, followed Jenny and Nils stole silently along behind them.

Mrs. Borg felt faint. Suppose Jenny's eye were hurt !

"Kalle kicked Jenny in the eye !" cried Wanda.

There was a great hubbub ! A horse was harnessed, and Mrs. Borg, who dared not touch the cut, climbed in the carriage with Jenny to take her at once to the doctor. Mrs. Borg was beside herself with anxiety. Suppose Jenny became blind from the accident ! And it had happened while she was visiting at Broby !

Aunt Annie, who had come out at the cries of the children, turned at once to Nils and asked him how it happened. He told her truthfully.

"Why must you always drag the girls with you into mischief ?" she asked in distress.

"We were just going to learn to turn cartwheels, and then Kalle kicked Jenny in the eye. Jenny wanted to see how Kalle did it, and leaned forward, and he was standing on his head and didn't see her, and then he kicked."

"But Kalle always goes barefoot," protested Auntie. "If he had been barefoot today it wouldn't have hurt her eye so much. How did

it happen that he was wearing shoes with iron-tipped heels ?"

"I thought," and now Nils looked ashamed, "I thought that they ought to look nice when they played with us and I told them to put on their shoes."

"You wicked boy !" cried Aunt Annie, angered, taking Nils by the ear. "If a whipping would do any good, you should have it ! Just think if Jenny's eye is hurt and she is blind for life !"

Nils looked crushed.

Aunt Annie left him, and he wandered round the garden alone, feeling very much worried.

Mr. Borg heard what had happened when he came up from the bathhouse, and if Nils had seen his face he would have hidden away.

At last Mrs. Borg and Jenny came home from the doctor's. Nils, who could find no peace, had stolen down the road to meet them. When the carriage stopped to pick him up, he began to cry and asked Jenny to forgive him.

The eye was not hurt. It had only looked serious because the cut over her eyebrow had bled so badly. But now the doctor had sewn the gash together, and Jenny had been very brave and had cried only a little.

The cut soon healed, but Jenny always bore the scar in the shape of Kalle's iron-tipped heel.

CHAPTER XII

WANDA SETS OUT ALONE IN THE WORLD

WANDA had been rude to old Kristin, and would not ask her pardon, and as Mother never allowed the children to be impolite to the servants, Wanda had been shut up in the nursery until she felt sorry. All the other children went out with Father on the bay in the big boat. But Wanda was angry and would not feel sorry. She thought that every one else was naughty and that she was good.

She stood behind the window shade, crying and

watching what fun the others were having down in *Bore*.

The bay was calm and bright. Auntie was going too, and Nils had his bark boat with him to sail beside *Bore*. Every one was having fun; it was only she who had to stay at home and be unhappy.

She thought that Mother was unjust to shut her up. Oh, why couldn't she go and have fun too ?

Wanda grew so angry that her face became fiery red.

Then the thought came to her that she did not have to stay at Broby where they were so mean to her. Dear no, she could run away from everything; yes, that's what she was going to do, and then they would be sorry !

She would go far, far away and get another mother who did not shut her up when the others went out on the water and had fun.

Wanda whirled about in the room hunting for the things she was going to take with her on the

journey; because now she was really going away, very far away. She pulled out the bureau drawers so that she might close the door and be left in peace. Then she began to get ready for her departure.

That little basket she would take with her to carry on her arm, just the way the old village women did. She chose, too, a toy milk bottle because it would be useful to have for some milk when she was thirsty.

The bureau drawers were pushed in again. Wanda opened the door a crack and poked out her head. No one was in sight.

She stole out through the vestibule to the yard and then through the back way to the kitchen. There she would find something for her lunch basket. No one was in the kitchen. The maids were down in the laundry, and that was a good thing, except that the pantry key had been taken away.

She looked searchingly round the kitchen.

The flies were buzzing in the dry birch branches in the ceiling, the saucepans shone, bright and newly polished on the freshly papered shelves, coals were still gleaming in the stove, and there was parsley in a glass on the window-sill.

She went to the kitchen cupboard and opened the door. A few pieces of bread in a basket, and two cucumbers, meant to be used that day, were the only eatables to be found.

Wanda snatched a few pieces of bread, seized a cucumber, and ran.

The cucumber and the bread were stowed away in her basket.

Her hat on her head, the milk bottle in her hand, and the basket on her arm ! Then Wanda was ready to leave Broby for all time, and now they need never scold her again, she thought.

She crept through the vestibule and out on the steps.

She wondered where Mother was. She just ought to see her Wanda going off, far, far away !

Poor, silly little Wanda, what would you have done if you had gone far, far away into the dark woods so that Mother could not hear you when you called her and longed for her and Broby and your bed; where she could not find you when it grew dark and silent and you were hungry! It was well that Wanda changed her mind before it was too late!

When Wanda reached the garden fence she had to turn her head back to look again at Broby. There was Mother on the steps, looking at her. Wanda could see plainly that she looked surprised and sad.

Poor Mother, who was losing her Wanda, she thought, and felt a trifle sad, too. Then she kept on turning her head, but Mother still sat quietly, just looking at her.

Wanda gave a sob; she thought Mother looked very kind, but she went on just the same. She looked again. Just think, she would never see Mother again! Oh, oh! and never again would

she have a kiss from her. Now she was sobbing violently. She had to stop walking in order to cry. She felt as if she were choking.

Once more she turned her head to look back. Oh, how sad Mother's eyes looked. At least Wanda thought they did, because she was so far away; she really could not see them now. No, she could not run away, she could not !

"Mother, dear Mother," she cried and set off at full speed up the hill, the bottle rattling and the cucumber hopping about in the basket.

"I want to stay, oh, I want to stay !" she sobbed, clinging fast to Mother.

Wanda kissed her and asked as usual to be forgiven, and told her how naughty she had been wanting to run away, and Mother said that she might go if she still wanted to. But then Wanda was beside herself and screamed that she would die if she were sent away.

At last Mother promised to forgive her, and then of her own accord Wanda asked Kristin's pardon,

and without being told went back to the nursery where she was supposed to be "imprisoned," as the children said. But Mrs. Borg came in and said that since she had confessed her rudeness and begged Kristin's forgiveness, she would be spared further punishment.

And Wanda crept into Mother's lap and kissed her, and wondered how it would have been if she were now far, far away from Broby.

CHAPTER XIII

THE COUSINS LEAVE BROBY

A LETTER had come from Stockholm with the news that Nils and Jenny's father was waiting to take them home, and as he could be there only a few days, the children were to leave Broby the very next day.

It was sad to have the cousins leave now when they were all so happy together. Mother was glad that Jenny's cut was healed, though the scar in her forehead was still red. Aunt Annie said that she would feel quite at peace when Nils was at home

with his mother again, because, she declared, since he was always up to so many pranks, she was always expecting him, or one of the other little ones, to be carried home either dead or hurt.

After dinner there was a big party at *Golden Star Castle*, and Nils and Jenny were allowed to cook on the little stove, all alone, which delighted them, and Nils promised solemnly that he would row his cousins on the Ronneby River when they came to visit him.

Wanda, who did not doubt for a minute Nil's ability to row, wanted to go with them at once.

The children played hide-and-seek the whole afternoon so that they were all tired out when supper time came. Little Jenny crept up into a corner of the living room sofa, and almost fell asleep, but Aunt Annie sat down at the piano after supper, and sang a funny song for them, and then she played *It's Christmas once again*,[1] and then the children had to get up and dance, although up to

[1] A popular Christmas song which everybody sings, as they join hands and dance around the Christmas tree.

that time they had been exhausted. Father and Mother also joined in to make the circle bigger, and then Father led them in a snake-dance round tables and chairs, and once even way out on the lawn.

At last the children said good night, and tired as they were, they were soon asleep.

The next morning Greta and Wanda, with big bouquets of flowers in their hands, were standing down on the dock, talking eagerly with their cousins. Just now it seemed that they had ever so much to tell each other. Father, Mother, and Auntie sat down on the bench beside the steamboat flag while the children chattered to their heart's content.

The flowers were duly presented; Jenny was very happy and kissed her cousins in thanks; Nils bowed and looked a little embarrassed because he had been given flowers just like a girl. But he had seen gentlemen wear flowers in their button-

holes, so he fastened his in the buttonhole of his coat and felt quite big and grown-up.

But the bouquet would not stay straight, it was so big that Mother had to help him fasten it with four pins. It would have been big enough for fifteen buttonhole nosegays but the size did not trouble Nils. He kept looking proudly at his bunch of flowers, which pricked his face if he turned his head, and promised his cousins again that he would take them rowing on Ronneby River when they came to visit him.

Then the steamer came and took them away. Handkerchiefs fluttered; the boat pitched and snorted; and Nils and Jenny stood on the deck beside the captain, who knew Father and had promised to look after them until they reached Stockholm, where their father was to meet them.

As long as the boat could be seen, Greta and Wanda stayed on the dock, waving at it. Then they followed the others back, thinking it seemed

strangely empty at Broby. Their games somehow did not go so well today.

Then next morning Father planned to go fishing. Lasse was going to row, and Father had promised Greta jokingly that she could go too, if she could be up so early. Greta was eager to go and believed that she could be up. She knew that Father had really given that promise in the belief that she would oversleep; but she could be awake at five o'clock ! Of that she was perfectly sure.

It was not more than four o'clock when Greta crept out of bed. She dressed all by herself and tried to do it as well as possible. As she could not braid her hair, it had to hang loose. Otherwise she looked quite well, if one did not look too closely; but it had been very slow work.

At half-past four she ran to the bedroom door, knocked hard to wake Father, and announced that she was almost dressed.

Father sounded surprised when he heard her voice and she felt proud to think that she had wakened him. Then she ran back to finish dressing.

Soon Kristin came into the living room with the coffee tray, and when Father had come in and said good morning to Greta, they drank their coffee together.

Greta asked to pour his coffee for him, and she was allowed to do so because she had awakened him. Otherwise, he said, he would surely have overslept.

Greta thought it was hard to eat so early in the morning, but Father said she must try. Otherwise she would be hungry out on the water.

Kristin handed her a big bag of lunch, with a nod, and when she looked into it she found two ginger cookies, a sandwich, and three thick ring-twisted biscuits.

Out in the yard, Lasse was getting the fishing lines ready.

Greta went out on the steps. Oh, how lovely it was out of doors!

She stepped out into the yard. The air was fresh and clear. It made one feel wide awake and happy to breathe in long deep breaths.

There was a sparkle on bushes, grass, and trees. Everything looked freshly washed and new, as if it wished to say good morning. Greta felt so light she thought she could run any distance without being tired.

She jumped up and down on the terrace, just because she had to do something. Then, while she was waiting for everything to be made ready, she ran down to the gate and back again.

Her heart beat fast and her blood ran briskly through her veins. Oh, how strong and happy she felt. She picked several daisies and put them in her sash as she always did, and softly began to sing a little song which Mother had taught her;

How lovely is the morning hour
When the birds of the forest twitter and sing,

When the cuckoo calls in the fresh green bower,
And the sun's beams sway on the waves.
Then wakes the rose on the dewy branch
And the butterflies flutter and dip. Ah, that
Is the loveliest hour of all.

"Well, so my little bird is chirping," said Father coming out on the porch, ready to start.

"Yes," she nodded. "The little bird is so happy because she is going fishing with Father !" and she hopped along after him, down to the boat which Lasse had just finished bailing out. Greta's fishing rod was already there; the paper bag of lunch she held in her hand.

They stepped into the boat. Greta sat in the bow where she could watch the water gushing along the sides of the boat, with a purling sound, as Lasse's strong arms rowed them forward.

The water seemed to be asleep, and the wind, too, seemed to be resting in some mountain crevice, for everything lay still and quiet. The sun was awake

and up long ago, but it, too, had a sort of morning freshness about it; it did not beat down the way it does during the day, and it must just have wakened the birds, because one after another was calling its "good morning, wake up !"

After Father had angled for a while without getting any fish, they turned to the perch grounds to bob. There the fish were plentiful, and Father and Lasse got bite after bite; but Greta's bait was untouched.

Later they rowed to several other grounds, and when they came home at breakfast time, Greta carried in her handkerchief a pike which she had caught. A small fry had nibbled at her hook and just as she was about to pull up her line, the young pike had nibbled at the fry, and had been pulled up into the boat where Lasse killed it.

Greta was not a little proud as she climbed up Broby hill to Mother and asked her to guess what she had behind her back. Of course Mother could not guess that it was a pike. She thought it

might possibly be a roach, and was much surprised when Greta held up the pike.

After it had been properly admired, Greta told first Mother, then Auntie, then Wanda, and at last Kristin how her first catch had come about and how she had been able to get a pike.

After breakfast and the study hour were over, Greta and Wanda put their wise heads together to plan to cook the pike on the little stove.

They did not know whether to roast it or to boil it with horse-radish sauce. Aunt Annie suggested that they bake it because she liked baked pike very much.

Yes, they would bake the pike. But they wanted no help, and they darted off to *Golden Star Castle* carrying the pike which Kristin had dressed for them.

Mother and Auntie must have thought it was going to be a strange dish; they both smiled as the children ran off chattering.

It was not very long before they were back.

Greta had a blister on her finger and both looked crestfallen.

Auntie asked if the pike had been very good, since they had eaten it all themselves, without inviting her to taste it, and then they had to confess that it had not been good at all. And in the playhouse, one smelled an unpleasant odor, and in the little dripping-pan in the oven lay some blackish, shrunken thing, which might once have been the pike.

WHERE is King? Has anyone seen King?" asked Greta, after she had hunted for him in vain in all possible places. No, no one had seen him.

"He was in the kitchen this morning and had some milk," said Kristin, "and afterward I saw him playing with the Vallby dog."

Since then no one had seen him.

Greta was much troubled, but Father calmed her by saying that King would probably be back soon. He had probably only gone part way down the road with Rappo.

CHAPTER XIV

GRETA'S FIRST SORROW

EVENING came, but King did not come back. The children looked for him everywhere, but he was nowhere to be found. Little Murre cried herself to sleep that night, and when she woke up the next morning, her first question was about King. Alas, he had not returned.

Everybody looked for him. They thought that possibly he had been shut in somewhere. All the wardrobes, storehouses, attics and cellars were searched, but King was gone.

The children went about sorrowfully, asking every one they met if they had seen little King.

No; no one had seen him.

Evening came again, but King had not been found.

Two days later an old woman came to the house, and when the children asked her if she had seen King, she told them that she had seen a little brown dog, lying, bitten to death, right beside the road in the Vallby estate.

Greta gave a cry and ran across the yard, through the gate, and along the road toward Vallby.

Wanda called to her but she did not hear; she just ran and ran. She must get to little King. He could not be dead. She would soon find him and carry him home.

She ran and ran, until she could hardly breath.

"Oh, little King, little King!"

Sometimes she sobbed, but still she ran on.

At last she could not run any farther; she had to rest. The road to Vallby was long.

The sun was shining and the woods were lovely, but today she did not notice it. The birds might sing their best; they did not know about little King.

Then she went on, sometimes running, sometimes walking.

When she saw the high roofs of Vallby before her, her steps faltered; and as she went slowly up towards the grounds she was afraid. She stole across the lawn toward the buildings. There on the steps stood the owner of Vallby. Greta had seen him only once, but he probably did not recognize her.

She curtseyed.

"Good day. Is little King here ?" she asked shyly.

"Who is little King ?" wondered the gentleman in the brown coat, smiling at her.

"My little dog," she answered softly. "Some one said, some one said, that he . . . was lying . . . dead here," she sobbed out.

"Oh, I see . . . yes, there is a little dead dog down there in the park. So it was your dog, little girl ?" said the gentleman sympathetically, as Greta clenched her hands and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"My big dog, Fox, bit him to death," went on the master of Vallby. "He can not bear small dogs, and your King must have come here with Rappo."

"Oh," cried Greta. "Why did Fox have to bite my King to death ? Oh, how mean, how mean !"

"Yes, Fox is bad sometimes," he answered. "But don't cry so hard, dear child. Your dog won't come back to life no matter how hard you cry — and you can soon get a new dog."

Greta only sobbed and ran down to the park where the gentleman had told her that she would find King.

No, it *could* not be true ! King, who had run, jumped and barked, and been so good; King, who used to fawn on her and be so happy when he saw her — he could not be dead !

But then she saw a little brown body in the grass. Yes, it was King, her own, dear, little King !

At that moment she could not think of anything in the wide world but King. She felt almost afraid, as she saw him lying there so still. One of the servants came across the grass toward her.

"Poor little one," she said as she saw Greta's sorrow.

"Oh, how awful that big Fox should bite little King to death !" she murmured.

"Yes, Fox did bite him, but he could have run home to Broby anyway if the bad school boys had let him alone. They were going by when Fox bit him, and stopped to watch. King broke free from Fox and was just going to run away when one of the school boys chased him and threw a stone at

the poor little thing. When they saw King trying so hard to get away, the other boys began to shriek and laugh, and so they all picked up stones and threw them at him. I saw them from the window and hurried out, but by the time I had run across the yard and down here, it was too late. But I gave the boys a good scolding."

Greta only stared at Louisa, who became frightened when she saw how pale the child was. Yes, there lay several stones on the grass, big, sharp stones !

Oh, how Greta at that moment, hated the cruel wicked boys who had thrown stones at her little King just to amuse themselves.

"He wanted to run home, he wanted to run home," she murmured and began to cry again.

"Yes, that he did," agreed Louisa.

"I'll carry him home now," said Greta, though she felt afraid to touch him.

But Louisa stopped her and said she would ask one of the farm boys to bury him.

"Go home, now, dear child, and don't cry any more," she added as she left Greta.

"Yes . . . I'll go. Good-bye, little King," she whispered, with trembling lips.

Then she looked at him a long time, moved her lips again as if she wanted to say something, but there came only a heart-breaking sob, and then she ran away without looking back.

GRETA seemed to be inconsolate over the loss of King. Wanda, too, thought that it was sad, but after she had wept a while, she was happy again and soon comforted. With Greta it was quite different.

King had been her constant companion and best friend. She had told him all her little sorrows and joys, she had fed him and played with him, and now he was gone !

The first day no one could make her eat anything at all. In the evening she cried herself to sleep, and at night she dreamed that the wicked

boys were stoning King, and she had to look on and could not help him, and King looked at her with his eyes which seemed to beg, "Greta, dear Greta, help me !"

Then she screamed aloud in her sleep and woke up so frightened that Mother had to come in to quiet her.

Poor little Greta. It was a hard time for her.

One nice day "the little bundle" came in with a covered basket and gave it to Greta. There was a present for Murre in it, she said, smiling radiantly.

"Thank you," said Greta beginning to open the basket.

Father and Mother, who were in the room, looked smilingly at each other and seemed to know what was in the basket, but Aunt Annie wondered what it could be, and begged Greta to hurry and open it, because she was awfully curious, she declared.

When it was open, Greta only stared at the contents. It was a little, Scotch terrier puppy, all brown, and he did look lovable.

Now, thought Mother, Greta will be happy.

But Greta did not look happy; she stared in terror at the little puppy, drew back, and cried, "No, no, take him away ! Oh, take him away !" And then she began to cry.

In dismay, Mother asked her why she cried so when they had wanted to make her happy.

Greta looked fearfully at the basket.

"I don't want any little dog any more. I'll like him too much and then they'll kill him ! Must I keep him ?"

Of course, Greta need not. What was one to do ?

But Wanda, who liked the new little dog as much as she did King, asked if she might have him, and so little Tusse [1] stayed at Broby just the same.

[1] Tŭs′sĕ.

Greta never petted Tusse; but avoided him instead.

"Why don't you ever play with Tusse ?" Aunt Annie asked her one day, as Wanda and Tusse were playing with a cork tied to a string.

"No," she said, looking earnestly at her aunt. "If I play with him, I'll like him, and then they'll kill him too."

And no one could cure her of that belief.

Tusse and Wanda jumped about and had great fun; Greta watched them and then stole away.

But Tusse was a rogue. He often ran round Greta, snapping at her dress, and making such funny leaps that she had to laugh. And so each day he lured her into laughing a little more.

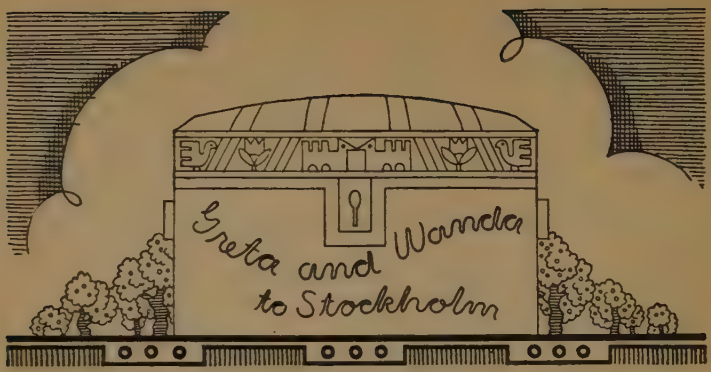
A few days later, when Tusse had been at Broby a week and felt quite at home, Greta was sitting on the top step of the porch, sewing a doll's apron which Auntie had cut out. Tusse came stalking out of the house, and when he saw Greta sitting on the steps and quite within his reach, he pattered

up behind her and all at once thrust his head under her arm and licked her hand, squeezed himself under her arm and then up into her lap, where he lay down with a cocksure air, as if to say, "Chase me away now, little Greta, if you can !"

But Greta could not.

She took Tusse in her arms, began to cry, and ran away with him, while Tusse licked her face and snapped at her nose in play.

From that day Tusse became a pet of hers too, and Wanda, who was a good little sister, offered to give half of Tusse to Greta.



CHAPTER XV

AUNT ANNIE GOES AWAY

AUTUMN was drawing near, and in a few days Aunt Annie was going back to Stockholm.

Everyone at Broby, and especially the children, was very sad at her going, but Auntie promised laughingly that she would come out often, now that she knew how nice it was there; and when the boats stopped running she would take the train, and Father would meet her, and the children might go along to the station to welcome her.

"You know, Laura," said Auntie one day as

they were sitting talking about what fun it would be to go to meet her at the station, "you know, Laura, I think I might be allowed to borrow the children for a few weeks. Would you like that, small folk ?"

"Yes, yes, oh, yes, Auntie !" and they danced about with joy.

Auntie went on talking about it, saying that Grandmother would like to see them. She had not seen them that summer, and the children would like Stockholm too. Yes, somehow Aunt Annie talked Mother into promising to think it over.

Father and Mother held a conference, and at last the children were told that they might go, provided they could promise to be good.

Yes, indeed, they could.

And Greta could dress herself, except for combing her hair, and she could help Wanda so that Auntie would not have too much trouble with them. Yes, everything would be perfect, and oh, what fun !

Just think of seeing Stockholm !

Auntie had to sit by the hour telling them what Stockholm looked like. There were many churches, and they would go to them. Then there were many, many houses too, but they could not go into all the houses, Auntie said, when Wanda suggested that they might do that too.

Wanda thought that was strange. Why couldn't they go into all the houses ?

Because there were strangers living there.

But strangers often came to Broby, and they were always allowed to come in !

And then Auntie told them that one did not speak to everybody one met in Stockholm. This the children thought was impolite. They always curtseyed prettily when they met strangers out here on the road, and they believed that they would do the same thing to those they met in Stockholm.

"Then you'd have plenty to do, little ones," said Father, and explained that one met a great many people, more than there were in the Broby church

on Sundays. And just think, there were lanterns out on the streets! Wanda promised Kristin to buy her some street lanterns before she came back.

They could not quite understand what the street cars which Aunt Annie talked about looked like, but Auntie promised that they should ride in them.

The children spent hours together wondering and thinking about all that they were going to see.

As soon as they had been promised that they might go with Auntie, they had to run to tell the happy news to everybody. Kristin, Johansson, Lasse, the maids, Tony, Tusse, the chickens, and Kurre, all were told, and all were sure that they were going to have a great deal of fun. The trip to Stockholm became a daily subject of conversation.

The dolls were going too, because now they had so many dresses that they could appear anywhere. Aunt Annie had made them as lovely as princesses, and the girls believed that Grandmother would be glad to see Lilly and Sally again.

"Aunt Annie," said Greta, standing beside her chair. "Will we see the king in Stockholm ?"

"That may be," answered Auntie.

"Does the king wear a gold crown and a trailing mantle like the king on our candy-pictures ?" she asked further.

Auntie explained that the king was not dressed like that when he was on the street, but the children thought that was too bad, because everything was not quite right unless the king had a gold crown and a trailing mantle.

Now there was a great deal to be done for the coming journey. Mother sewed lace and ribbons on their dresses. Kristin washed and ironed. And the children themselves had the doll's clothes to think of.

It would seem strange to go away from Broby and from Father, Mother, and Tusse; but their parents were coming for them soon, and Kristin had promised to look after Tusse.

Greta gathered pebbles which she was sure Grandmother would like to have, and Mother promised that they should take with them a big basket of flowers, strawberries, and gooseberries.

When the day of departure came, they awoke early in the morning, fretting to be allowed to get up. When they were dressed they ran, hand in hand, to say good-bye, to Kristin, Tusse, *Golden Star Castle*, Kurre, and the chickens. They could hardly eat their breakfast, so filled were they with thoughts of the trip.

"Good-bye, my darling little ones," said Mother, when they were down on the dock. And then for the first time they began to think about how sad it was to go away. But Mother comforted them by saying that soon they would come for them, and the children dried their tears.

"Be very good now, children!" Mother warned them when the boat came. "And give Grandmother my love!"

"Yes, yes," they cried.

"Take care that the little 'bundle' doesn't creep down into some ditch !" teased Father.

"Oh, I'll look after them," promised Auntie, and after they had kissed Father, Mother, and Tusse, and patted old Kristin, they went on board.

"Good-bye, Father ! Good-bye, Mother ! Good-bye, Kristin ! Good-bye, Tusse !" they called from the steamer deck, waving their hands and throwing kisses.

Wanda was about to cry, but Aunt Annie, who probably had forseen this, thrust something into her hand and bade her look. It was the red stone which had been in Aunt Annie's parasol and which Wanda had admired so much.

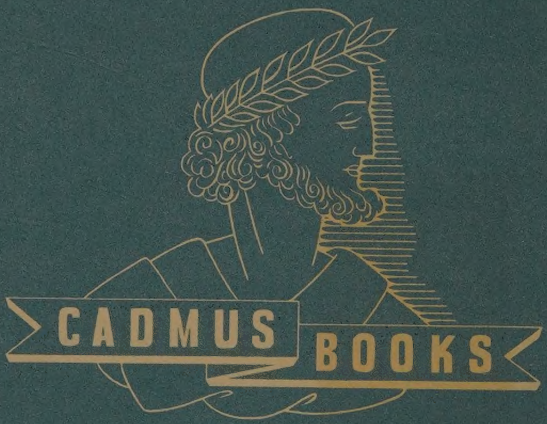
Wanda held it up to show Mother, and then the boat began to kick and splash, and move away from Broby, while handkerchiefs were still fluttering from the dock and from the boat.

And now Greta and Wanda are on a visit at Grandmother's in Stockholm and like it very much.

WANDA AND GRETA AT BROBY FARM

Life on a farm in Sweden is very similar in many ways to farm life in this country. This index refers you to the pages that tell about Swedish customs.

Bathing, 9-12, 109-112
Boating, 80-85, 98-101, 164, 173, 177
Chickens, 6, 22-24, 49-52
Clothes, 45, 68, 135, 160-161
Cooking, 140-149, 179-180
Cow, 85-88, 96-97
Fishing, 53-55, 174-178
Food, 12, 29, 44-46, 93-95, 101, 145-149, 166, 175
Home, 1-6, 29
Horses, 14-15, 154
Maypole, 2
Music, 82, 135, 171, 176-177
Nature, 89, 97, 105-106
Occupations, 7, 19, 72, 154, 162
Painting, 78, 103-104, 106-108, 113-114, 116-117
Plants and trees, 2-3, 5, 13, 18, 39, 55
Playhouse, 3-5, 38, 41-47, 139-149, 171
Playing, 32-34, 49-52, 53-55, 66-72
Sewing, 16-17, 34-35
Stockholm, 194
Transportation, 25-26, 173


CADMUS
BOOKS

IMC
Hist.
Col.
Fic
P1802W
1930
c.1

DEMCO